AMIGOS BRAVOS

Friends of the Wild Rivers

REDACTED VERSION

January 3, 2000

RECEIVED JAN 2000

Chris Meehan
Groundwater Protection & Remediation Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
PO Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Re: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews Regarding Molycorp Impacts

Dear Chris,

Enclosed are additional oral history transcripts as promised in my letter of December 20, 1999. Our 1999 oral histories were collected by Amigos Bravos intern Sandhya Ganapathy, a graduate student in applied anthropology from the University of South Florida, with the highest level of professional ethnographic expertise, as described in my previous letter.

Please contact me any time if I can provide any more information.

Sincerely,

Ernest Atencio
Projects Director

RECEIVED JAN 4 2000 CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS BUREAU

PO BOX 238 • TAOS, NEW MEXICO 87571
T. 505-758-3874 • F. 505-758-7345
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Friends of the Wild Rivers

December 20, 1999

Chris Meehan
Groundwater Protection & Remediation Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
PO Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Re: Transcripts of Oral History Interviews Regarding Molycorp Impacts

Dear Chris,

In response to your 12/16/99 request, enclosed are transcripts of interviews Amigos Bravos has conducted in Questa as part of our ongoing Oral History Project. I hope that these transcripts are useful to you as further documentation of Molycorp's impacts on the Red River and the community of Questa. In addition to Molycorp's well-documented impacts to groundwater, surface water and air quality, these interviews provide clear evidence of Molycorp's ongoing social, cultural and potential health impacts.

These oral history interviews were collected with the highest level of professional ethnographic expertise by Eirian Humphreys, under my direct supervision. Ms. Humphreys conducted these interviews during an internship with Amigos Bravos as part of her field research for a MA in applied socio-cultural anthropology at Northern Arizona University. She is a fluent Spanish speaker and has previously collected oral histories from the Chicano community in Flagstaff, AZ. As her supervisor, I also have an MA in applied socio-cultural anthropology from Northern Arizona University and a broad range of ethnographic research experience, including collecting oral histories from northern Arizona cowboys and members of the Havasupai Tribe.

The enclosed transcripts from our 1998 field season are from general oral history interviews and not necessarily focused specifically on Molycorp. I am sending those that are most relevant, but you may need to flip through a few pages on some of them to get to Molycorp or water quality information. In addition to these transcripts, others from our 1999 field season, which are focused more specifically on Molycorp's impacts, are being prepared as I write and should be available within a week or two. Our 1999 oral histories were collected by Amigos Bravos intern Sandhya Ganapathy, another graduate student in applied anthropology from the University of South Florida, again with the highest level of professional ethnographic expertise.

If you'd like to interview or depose individuals in Questa personally or more to the specific issues, I'd recommend contacting the following individuals:

PO BOX 238 • TAOS, NEW MEXICO 87571
T. 505-758-3874 • F. 505-758-7345
email: bravos@taos.newmex.com

(b) (6) (own property adjacent to (b) (6)
(b) (6)
(b) (6) (directly impacted by groundwater contamination below tailings facility– (b) (6)
(b) (6)
(b) (6) (native Questaño and structural engineer– (b) (6)
(b) (6) (life-long resident and acequia parciante–
(fishing guide who's been fishing the Red for over 20 years– (b) (6)
(b) (6) (life-long resident and founding member of Concerned Citizens of Questa—??)
(b) (6) life-long resident and community activist– (b) (6)
(life-long resident and community activist–

Please contact me any time if I can provide any more information.

Sincerely,

Ernest Atencio
Projects Director

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: (b) (6) [redacted]

SG: I'm here with (b) (6) [redacted] And basically let's just start off with when you came to New Mexico, northern New Mexico, Questa area, and why you came here?

(b) (6) [redacted] Well, I first came here cause I was married and had a baby. Well, my wife was pregnant. And we had decided that we didn't want to have a kid in New York City, and raise them in New York City. We came here kind of as a fluke. Somebody had been talking about northern New Mexico as being kind of a hospitable environment. So we took the train without knowing much about it, with two duffle bags and a guitar, New York to Chicago. Them we took another train, Chigaco to Albuquerque. Then we took a bus from Albequerque to Taos. Stayed there at a motel called the Towhato Motel, kind of on the corner there accross diagonally from MacDonalds, where you turn to the Taos News. It's not there now. It's kind of an empty area. And, um, one thing kind of interesting, we heard about the Llama Foundation. We didn't know anything about it. We hitchhiked from Taos up to Llama and then walked two-thirds up the way the mountain to the Llama foundation. But kind of a weird place, it wasn't really a commune. It was more of a, I don't know what you call it, an up-scale kind of a quasi-spiritual community. And you couldn't just go there, they only had visiting hours. They still do, just on certain hour, like on Sunday from 1 to 6. And if you weren't invited there, you just showed up as we were, they weren't like, "Well come on in." They just pretty much told us when visiting hours were. Didn't, you know, offer us a drink of water or whatever. So we went back down, back into Taos. And we had things happening. We eventually dug in, lived in Taos for that year, '70. We had our oldest kid. And we moved to Questa the next year. I had met (b) (6) [redacted] Did you interview him?

SG: Yeah, I did.

(b) (6) [redacted] I met him in Taos. He was living in Questa of course. We were both working for the same contractor. And we got friendly right away. And he came over for lunch at my house in Taos. And he kept saying, "Oh, you gotta move up to Questa. It's great in Questa. Taos is no good." You know, typical kind of chauvanism. A year later, we were looking to move. And we actually met some people. And this was kinda like the hippie era, in 1970, '71. If you wanted, you could meet people [snaps] like that. People would be very accepting. We met some people and visited them up at Llama and ended up moving up to Questa. I looked up (b) (6) [redacted] And actually, some time later, moved to a house in Questa that belonged to an uncle of his. Lived there for a few years. I vaugely knew about Molycorp. Actually, more than vaguely because for a while I worked for (b) (6) [redacted] who owns the supermarket. And he had a scrap metal business. And part of his business was hauling scrap metal for the mine. He had a backhoe and a dump truck over there. I did a lot of different jobs for him there. And one of my jobs was going up to the mine, loading metal into the dump truck, and driving it back to his property and dumping in so that he enough to take a semi-load to Boulder or Denver or Pueblo. And so I knew the mine existed, but I didn't really . . . I was kind of ignorant or oblivious. I never really thought too much about pollution. Nobody ever really spoke about pollution. This was 1971, '72. I can't remember ever hearing anything negative. And at the same time, the mine wasn't very big-time. There weren't

really a lot of people employed there. It wasn't really like the big affluent period that sort of happened in the later seventies. You know, increased production quite a bit, started hiring a lot of people and paying more wages and started the changes in the whole economy. I'm sure you know that typically people, you know, had scrappy types of exisitence. They had their little ranch with sheeps, chickens, and pigs and cows. They had different kinds of jobs, construction related or farming related. Kinda good hard hustlers and hard workers, but it wasn't the kind of affluence you saw when the mine was really going.

SG: Didn't bring in that much money.

(b) (6) Right. Pretty soon, people changed to a more cash, consumerism type typical American economy which is one of the sorta social things that happened, via the mine. You could call it like cultural pollution instead of dust pollution or water pollution. The people's whole outlooks changed. They became hooked on consumerism and the El Dorados and sattelite dishes. And everybody had a snow mobile. I mean I can remember in the '70s, nobody had a Jeep. You know, you think nothing of driving in a snow truck with just a pick-up truck and a weight in the back, a log or whatever. I mean now, nobody goes five feet without a four-wheel drive if they seen one snow flake. So you know, that's kind of an interesting thing.

SG: Um, you said you were friends with (b) (6)

(b) (6) Yeah.

SG: Did he . . . I know he used to work at the mine. Did he tell you about . . .

(b) (6) Well when I met him, he had just finished working at the mine. He'd gotten fired, and he was sueing them. And I think he had already won a suit against them. I think a discrimination suit. That was in the seventies.

SG: Did he tell you what he thought of the mine? Or no?

(b) (6) At the time, that's all he told me. And like I said, I was kind of oblivious. This was the early seventies. It was just like if he told me he had worked for JC Penney's, got fired and sued 'em. I didn't really. The mine wasn't this bog ominous thing in '71, '72, proportionately. At least in my eyes. It was just another thing, you know, like the electric company or . . . It was just a business, just another business. It was large, but it wasn't ominous. Didn't like . . . as opposed to when I moved back here in '84, the mine was looming over the area.

SG: So when did you . . .

(b) (6) I left in '74. Moved to San Francisco for ten years. Moved back in '84. And I moved back in '84, I lived in Questa and bought some property there. And you know, having been friends with (b) (6) And I meet (b) (6) he and (b) (6) (b) (6) were in this organization, 'Concerned Citizens of Questa. And they were into, they were into different things. One of them was getting a stop light crossing up by the schools. Another

thing was the pollution from the mines, primarily the dust. There had been some huge dust clouds and they had a walk out from the school. I don't remember what year it was, but it was prior to the year I moved back. So the dust was a big issue. And there were people that were bothered by it. There were young that told me that they were in sports and it bothered them. The dust blew. And I was of course extremely interested cause I had . . . this was 1984. I had a nine year old, a seven year old, and a three year old. My two older kids were not living in the area then, although they came back sometime cause they were from a former marriage. So I was real interested in the dust. Cause I had kids that were going to . . . they weren't going to the current school that's right by the tailings pond. They were going to the elementary which was close to the town. But still, you know the dust clouds, it was a trip. When it blew it, you, you, like something . . . you'd see it, cause you know, it covered the whole town. I haven't seen any lately, in the last couple of years. I'm not sure why.

SG: Yeah, people have said that, 'em, they still occur, but I guess . . .

(b) (6) Not as profound.

SG: Yeah. But so you were concerned about the health of your children.

(b) (6) Oh absolutely. It's like . . . Well I was down immediately with anything environmental anyway. And so I got real interested in it. I got to know (b) (6) pretty well. And we actually started working together. I was into remodeling/construction. He was a furniture maker, cabinet maker for years. So we started working together. We were partners for '85 to '87 or something like that. '87 maybe? I don't know, maybe . . . . So, you know, we were interested in the public health issue. The river, you know, I was aware of. But the dust was more of an issue with me, cause I had school-age kids. The river to me was another issue. And once we got into it, it became an obvious issue. I'm sure you've walked the river. You can see the point where it's this milkyish, blueish, whiteish looking stuff. And then you go up, up, up, and all of a sudden you have got a fine looking, normaling looking river. It's clear, semi-clear, and vegetation and all that. So that's kinda like a no-brainer. It's like 'Wow. Look at that.' Somebody gonna do something? You know, we had people come out from . . . At that time, my first exposure to it was the State Environmental Improvement Division. I don't know if they still exist. I don't see that, I don't see those initial come up in the literature anymore. I think they might of changed it.

SG: I think they might of changed their name.

(b) (6) That's what I think. So we first got a tip from a guy . . . They had different areas, the Surface Water Control, the Ground Water people, the Air Quality people. We got an inter-office memo from a guy who was an employee in the Air Quality. And it showed that they had monitoring up there by the . . . near the school, there was an air monitor. It probably still exists. And they recorded violations of the Federal and State maximum of what they call 'air-borne particulates' of a certain size. I think it was less then ten microns. They have some sort of air filtration system and meter that allows you to test how much passes by in a period of time.

SG: Do you have a copy of that memo.

(b) (6) No. I don't have any of those. I don't what happened. I had boxes of that stuff and at some point I passes them on to some one.

SG: I should try to dig that stuff up. Do you know who I would have to talk to?

(b) (6) [redacted] Have you talked to him?

SG: No, I haven't . . .

(b) (6) He lives on [redacted]

SG: Yeah. I never figured out which exactly his house was.

(b) (6) It's kind of a punky house. You could have Joe take you there. Do you contact (b) (6) [redacted] anymore?

SG: Yeah, I'll ask him.

(b) (6) He'll take you there. Cause he's a very eloquent guy too. He might have records. Anyway. We saw this document that was from the EID, that stated black and white that there were violations and more than so many violations in a certain period of time constituted another major violation. I thought, well this is it. The so called smoking gun. Man, we spun our wheels with those documents so many times. I went to meetings and . . . It was like a show game, you know. Basically if you went down to the meeting and you were making a strong point. First of all, let me back track a little bit. They're getting paid. You're talking to like the State environmental people. Meanwhile, you're taking time off of work, that's number one. Number two, except for one time or two times, you have to go down there to their place. You know, wait around, etc., etc., have your meeting. If you're making a good point . . . and then, more often then not, this was Molycorp people there, with their attornies to rebut anything you have to say. Right. At a certain point, we had a group and that was then an attorny for the Sierra Club and New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water. The State took an interest in the situation to a certain extent. They even funded a lawsuit at some point that, um, the judgement was in favor of the environmental group. Molycorp had to pay, I thought a real nickel and dime fine for water violations. Anyway, although part of it was they improved their piping system. You know the piping system, you've seen it off the Red River. It used to be really primative. There are so many breaks.

SG: Yeah. I heard they moved it accross the street or something.

(b) (6) Yeah. They moved it and got better pipes basically. My point was always if it was oil or something valuable, no way would they let it spill. But since they didn't care, they'd have spills and just deal with it, basically. They haven't had spills. They've improved. You know, they don't have the amount of spills that they used to. I mean it was like cement pouring out, fill up the irrigation ditches. The people were so cowed by the mine, because they were hooked on the salaries that even if they were a miner and the shit came all over their land and irrigation ditches,

they wouldn't make waves.

SG: Was the mine a steady source of income at that time. Cause I know it opens and closes and opens and closes.

(b) (6) Yeah. It was pretty steady from like the late '70s. Then it got real big-time until '86 I think, it closed the first time.

SG: I wonder if after the mine started laying off people, if people changed their opinions of it.

(b) A little bit. But see, a lot of the people cried their eyes out for a year or so and then started getting other jobs. And some of them really prospered. There are some real successful businessmen who were formerly sad laid-off miner. But, you know there's also like . . . I guess one point that's probably been brought up before. People a lot times depersonalize in debates in Questa. Like for instance, let's say you're a miner and say you're a counselmen. I mean you don't want to take too much of an anti-mine position. Or even none, because you're employed them. And you're brothers and cousins are employed by them. And it just isn't the right thing to do. And then somebody else doesn't work for the mine, is an environmentalist, and they make an antagonistic point about the mine. And you end up debating with them. All of a sudden it becomes very personal. It's not . . . you can't just dissociate yourself from the issue. What happens is, you know, people were like if you were an environmentalist, you were in a certain category. Where you were in a miner, you were in a different category. Kind of like an 'us and them' thing. Just a typical tactic, you know, power structures use to control people. You know, just divide 'em up, divide 'em up. Meanwhile, everybody's getting screwed by the mine. Even, I always felt that the miners were getting screwed because they were making like . . . I don't remember what the ore goes for. Like two dollars a pound or whatever it goes for. But at a certain point, it was going for like thirty dollars a pound. And it could them like $1.50 to extract it. And they're paying guys like $12 bucks and hour, which was maybe good money to them. But it was . . . They were taking tons of money out of the area. Then as soon as the price drops, they were . . . they cut benefits on 'em. They were like 'The price of the ore is dropping. We're gonna have to close. But if you give up you're benefits, we'll stay open." People were like 'We'll give 'em up!' And then they close anyway in three months or four months. And then when they open again, they open without the benefit.

SG: Wow. And then so all that time when it was thirty buck a pound, they made so much profit.
(b) (6) And then if it drops, they cried about. They never talked about the times when they made big profits. The only . . . if the price drops, then they put the full core press on the town. You know, they say, 'Well we want this . . .' They were trying to get this Guadelupe site on. Those mountains there slightly to the northwest of Questa. They wanted to build another tailings pond there. But I always felt that maybe they wanted to open up . . . just was a chance for them to get free land. Mining pacts, you could probably get for five dollars an acre or something ridiculous. So the chance for them to get this huge tract . . . That was one of the few successful things. Somehow it didn't go down. You know, we were fighting that back then. It almost went down, but it didn't go down. All the town government people and the pro-mine people were saying, 'Give it to 'em. Whatever. As long as they stay open.' But it was kinda like a . . . a phoney

deal. They just wanted the property. It had nothing to do with keeping open or not keeping open. Which is true, cause they didn't get in there and it's still open. You know the mine is not a locally owned company. It's owned by Unocal. They're out in L.A.. So you know, they're people making decisions in an office in L.A.. Questa, Bangladesh, you know, whatever . . . they don't care . . . People or whatever. They're looking at numbers on a paper. You know, 'Open. Close.'

SG: That's probably how it happened.

GW: They once sent some people out here. We had a little bit of momentum going in the town, where we had some good presentations at meetings. Things were getting stirred. The Taos News was picking in up. Different things. They sent about three or four guys from L.A. out to kinda feel the pulse of the town. We had a luncheon with them. We had a guy there that lived right in the path of the dust, a real stand uplocal guy, you know, good job, nice family.

SG: Do you know what his name was?

(b) (6) [redacted]

SG: [redacted]

(b) (6) [redacted] He worked for the phone company.

SG: Does he still live in town.

(b) (6) I think so. Or he lives in Taos. I'm not sure. Real nice guy. Two kids . . . three kids, went to high school when I lived in Questa. Both of sons are in the service. We were in the soccer program.

SG: So he lived right in the . . .

(b) (6) He lived pretty much right near the high school. And I know they were effected by the dust. But a lot of people gust grin and bear it. Like here we are.

SG: Did he grin and bear it.

(b) (6) Yeah. I mean, he was . . . he wasn't a fire and brimstone radical or anything. He was an easy-going guy, you know, nice family, job. He wasn't afraid of the mine, but he wasn't a rabble-rouser. But if you asked him, 'Did the dust bother you?' He'd say, 'Yeah. You know my eyes bothered me. I think my kid had some kind of respiratory problem.'

SG: Wow. So actually talked about it. Do you remember what some of his health concerns were?

(b) (6) Well, I think you probably should ask him. I just remember that he was one of the people

that I remember that lived there. You know. Like where we lived, it didn't blow that way. It has a path. Like the only winds are from the South-west blowing to the North-east. So, you know, the dust would usually for the path.

SG: Where did you live in town?

(b) (6) Kind of near where (b) (6) lives, in that valley there, a little bit more towards the moutain. Do you know where the 'Q' is on the mountain?

SG: Where what is?

(b) (6) The white 'Q.' Where they painted the white 'Q' on the side of the hill there.

SG: Huh? I've actually never noticed it.

(b) (6) When you go into Questa from Taos, you can see there on the right. You can see up on the hill . . . you know where the cemetary is they call Pohito.

SG: I guess all I noticed was the big scar from the mine.

(b) (6) Yeah. Well it's closer into town than that.

SG: Okay. I'll have to look out for it. But so . . .

(b) (6) We were concerned with health. Everybody was concerned with health effects. And that's one of the reasons we moved to Taos. The other reason was, probably equal if not more so, the schools are better in Taos. But that had something to with it. I kinda felt like, I can't send my kids here, you know, knowing that this is blowing. You know, it wasn't like 'Blow-Pow,' you know, where some kind of gas comes and people drop. It was more like long term lung problems, silicosis or maybe emphasema thirty years later. But people would be like 'Well I feel okay.' Yeah, but maybe in twenty years, you're lungs or something. Or maybe the quality of your life your last five years won't be as good as it should of been. Kinda very hard to make that point, especially when people are making money. Not even if they are, if their cousin is. So they're not supposed to say anything, cause if they say anything they're letting down the family. Just basically what we were fighting was . . . sort of a mining town basically from the late seventies, more so that an agricultural, ranching type of town . . . a mining town.

SG: So did many of the people in Questa, from what you noticed, did they have any of the same concerns? Or did they

(b) (6) Do they or are they now?

SG: Do they? Did they? Both.

(b) (6) Um, a lot of people did. But it's kinda like, I have friends that still live in New York and I

wonder why they live there. You know, I moved away. Why would you purposely want to live in a crowded place with 8 million other people . . . noisey and I don't know. They still do it. I don't know. People put up with stuff. But you know, people live in a certain spot in Questa and their parents live there and their brothers and sisters. It'd take a lot to move. And wasn't dramatic. You know, like you never hear of anybody like suddenly getting lung cancer three days after a dust cloud, or. Maybe there was some asthma, but people are like used to taking medicines now-a-days. People take all kinds of stuff and all kinds of proceedures. There's a lot of health problems that people have in northern New Mexico anyways. A lot of diabetes. That doesn't have anything to do with dust, probably genetic, dietary. There are strong people, hardy, that just can endure.

SG: Well what about today. You still work in Questa.

(b) (6) Yeah, that's one of my businesses there. I don't feel like the dust is bothering there. I haven't seen it. And also, it's not where my shop is, it's not in the path. The path is more to the north. And I haven't seen it either. As far as the river goes, I think it's distressing. But at a certain point, I became not an activist. I'm real happy that Amigos Bravos has picked it up and done what they're doing. And I'm glad (b) (6) is still active. And maybe I will become more active, but I haven't been in the last . . . I got kind of discouraged cause I put a lot of energy into it. I'd say since '84, I put a lot . . . 'till maybe '88. And then I got kind of discouraged.

SG: Like what? What got you discouraged?

(b) (6) Um, a lot of was just . . . Some of it was just really seeing not too much accomplishment for a really a lot of time, cause you can really put a lot time into something like that. Just . . . you can just shoot a day like that going to Santa Fe. A couple days maybe for preparation, rehashing what happened. To get involved in, you could be going every week. And sometime people you're working with don't have the same agenda. You could be working closely with four people. And you got three people who are partially going in the direction you're going, but maybe they're going here, maybe they're going there. All of a sudden, you realize they're going there and if you don't go there with them, they get pissed off at you. It's almost like this thing with the miners. If you don't agree with them, they take it personally. So it can be kind of troubling that way too.

SG: What are some of the things that happened that people disagreed with. You know, other activists . . . how did they approach it differenly then you did?

(b) (6) I'm not sure I understand you're question.

SG: Oh . . . you were just saying how people go in different directions, and I was just . . . .

(b) (6) Well thats . . . well I'm just going to give you a hypothetical example cause that's all I want to do. Let's say I'm working on a project with a person. That person had a personal antagonism with sombody else that's got the other point of view. I might not want to get sucked into that because that's another issue. I'm trying to concentrate on clean air and not something that

happened fourteen years ago. Those are the kind of things that can happen and I don't want to deal with that. I mean I approached it from an objective point of view and I really didn't want to get into something that wasn't objective. But it's very hard not to. I mean I could see that in a larger scale. Some one I really admire, Ralph Nader . . . hell of a guy . . . he's right on . . . and most of the people don't know who he is. And then there's those people who I always thought were sort of smart. And they sort of marginalize, like he's just a crank. But I realize that that's just because of misperceptions, whatever they're trip is. So I feel that whenever you're involved in a movement like that, nobody wants to be misunderstood, right? Or misrepresnted. So I guess what I'm saying is, if I'm gonna get involved in . . . at this point in my like, if I'm gonna get involved in a movement that's environmental or political, I gotta be really sure that I really want to do it, cause I know what it takes now. And I'm really gonna go full hook, line, and sinker. I don't want to just be in it sort of casually. I didn't think I was in the deal in Questa just casually, but someways it was. Because I didn't really have enough energy to put everything into it, to really affect any change. So at a certain point, I'm gonna have to . . . I just had to devote a little more time to making a living and my family. I didn't have the extra energy to put into that. And the way I was doing wasn't really satisfying. I felt like I was being misunderstood by a lot of people.

SG: By people in the community.

(b) (6) You know, I have a good standing in the community. And I've always gotten along pretty well with different people. And I didn't people to not . . . if some one's not gonna like me, I want them to have a damn good reason, not just some stupid reason. And I felt like that whole environment thing . . . nobody really . . . not everyone really understood what was going on. And if they did understand, it wouldn't be for them. And I kinda felt like, how much black can it be. Dust is bad for you. A lot of dust is really bad for you. They're producing a lot of dust. It's bad. You know, what more can I say. If that's not enough, forget about it. Or the water looks like soap here, here it doesn't. You know, that's the point that right by the mine. Well what's the next thing.

SG: Yeah. Well I know a lot of times that environmentalists and activists aren't always the most welcomed people in Questa.

(b) (6) Well it's become stigmatized. Like they use the word tree-hugger in the nortwest. You're familiar with that. That's stupid. In other words, if you want to preserve redwood trees you're stupid or something . . . anti-labor. You're not! [talks more about the lumber industry] . . . . You really got to devote yourself. They are people that if they feel threatened, they'll do anything. So you have to kinda pick and choose your position that you're gonna take and know what you're doing. Like you might say, 'I'm pro-choice.' Somebody might shoot you're ass just because they think you're a devil or something like that.

SG: Yeah. It's pretty dangerous.

(b) (6) [Talks about Mumia Abu-Jamal- 'It was an obvious set up.']

SG: Well one of the criticisms that people have made about environmentalists in Questa is they're outsiders coming in.

(b) (6) (b) (6) is not an outsider. (b) (6) isn't. (b) (6) isn't. (b) (6) isn't. But, you know, it goes back, it's probably gone back ions. That was always Nixon's thing, the silent majority and the vocal minority. You hear that term a lot. And when ever anybody objects, it's just the vocal minority. Most of the people don't think that. I think, you know, people that come from outside might be more outspoken, better educated. But so what? I mean that stuff is a big deal in New Mexico, that insider/outsider business. [Inaudible- talks about the Taos New and Geronimo] . . . But I know Chicano people that have lived in Questa and they're considered outsiders because they were born in Mora or something like that. Of their father was born in Mora and moved to Questa 30 years ago, but they're still considered outsiders because their grandparents are. So you know, that's the way it is, I'm sure all over the world. Well if you're rich. They respect people that have a lot of money. So if you have a lot of money or if you employ a few people, then you instantly gain status. [Talks more about the status of rich people] . . . [Talks about insider/outsider conflict in Taos].

SG: So now in Questa, do you think people are concerned about the mine?

(b) (6) You mean about the pollution?

SG: Yeah.

(b) (6) Well the dust doesn't seem to be a big issue. The river is an issue, and I would think that the people who irrigate off that river would definately be concerned. But I never hear anything out of them. I suspect that they're all miner or related to miners or they've been bought off.

SG: So what do you think environmental activists should do to . . . I mean I we'd need a lot more community support to ever take on . . . .

(b) (6) We have to start something. You mean me personally? If I felt something to me, was bothering me, I would speak out about it. But I just need to be really careful how I word things. I guess it's a thing of maturity too. The younger you are, the more sort of outspoken you'd be, just blurt things out. I'd be very careful how I said things, how I presented my case, and extremely careful who I allied myself with. Cause, you know, you don't want to be marginalized. It's kind of a common prase or something. But it's pretty good as far as being belittled. I guess another way of putting it, if you ally yourself with someone who's considered a crank, they'll say, "Oh, those people are just always complaining. They're always complaining." So if you're with them, then you're a part of that. So, to answer your question, I'm not saying that I wouldn't be allied with any environmental movements. I'd approach it a little bit differently. Instead of just leaping into it sort of blindly, I think I'm gonna be real careful with the research and real careful with what meeting I'm gonna go to and how you're gonna spend your energy. You only have so much energy. How you spend it, what you do with it.

SG: So like a group like Amigos Bravos. What would you suggest that we do to, to open

ourselved up more to the community, to get more people involved. I mean I know a certain segment won't be if they're miners, or if they are . . . .

(b) (6) I don't know. Amigos Bravos seems to be doing pretty good. How old is the organization? Five years old?

SG: I think ten.

(b) (6) Ten. It looks like they've grown. Have they grown every year?

SG: Yeah.

(b) (6) Seems like I can't tell them everything. They seem like they know what they're doing. They seem to have a healthy organization. Increasing in size . . . getting . . . doing well. It seems like they approached it in a good way. They didn't blast in. They built in a nice foundation, incorported a lot of local people. I'm interested in their trip. I haven't really put the effort into it. I sent them some bucks a couple of times. A raffle, a trip to wherever the hell, Cancun or something. But I applaud what they're doing. Sounds like they're really getting after Molycorp as far as their discharge permit.

SG: Yeah. There's a hearing coming up. Or there was and they're waiting for the state to give their results or findings or something like that.

(b) (6) They probably run into the same frustrations with the state as we do. Seems like . . . Well, I mean, in a certain level, it's not too surprising. You realize that the government is a front. Corporations run the country. So it's not like the government makes any decisions. They do what they're told. That's kind of what I thought. I mean the guy . . . we went down there and a meeting and the vice-director of the whole environment division was in our meeting. And somehow it came up that he was having lunceon meetings with the general manager, then general manager of Molycorp.

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: (b) (6)
Address (b) (6)
(b) (6)
Phone: (b) (6)
Date: 5/28/99
Time: 11 AM
Interview Location: (b) (6)

Interview Participant:
(b) (6) b) (6)
SG: Sandhya Ganapathy

Background:
(b) (6) is the owner of Questa Lumber. His family has lived in Questa for several generations and have played an active role in community affairs. I met (b) (6) at Questa Lumber and from there we drove to his house on (b) (6) On the way, (b) (6) had to stop several times to say hello to many neighbors and friends he saw walking by.

Topics Discussed:
- History of Molycorp's presence in Questa
- Family history in Questa
- Changes in livelihood in the community
- Effects of pollution
- Struggles in dealing with the mine and government bureaucracy
- Health impacts

Interview Highlights:

"[my grandfather started off as a miner there. He was a sheep herder in his older days and took care of family and stuff. But then when New Mexico became a state. Before that, my grandfather said that the mountains belonged to everybody. Everybody had a section where they took their sheep and their cattle, for the summer and did that. And, you know, everybody farmed. And basically had subsistence living. You cut firewood. You built your house. You farm a garden. You grow animals. And then you store up for the winter. And then all winter, you didn't do anything. You just basically lived, which was the ideal situation. Um, the coming of Molycorp brought a lot of. . . It kind of changed the lifestyle in that people started working for something else, for somebody else."

"[when Molycorp came, they provided jobs for those people who wanted to or learned how to mine and did mine. So it changed, it took, it kind of separated the family a little bit in that it took the men away from the family unit."

"I don't think I heard any complaint about the money that they made. The funny thing is, when the mine closed, there was still the pollution issue to deal with. Okay. Now what? Now who's

gonna take care of the dam. The wind was blowing, the dust was flying."

"You know we have a high incidence of cancer, respiratory disease. And, uh, we had actually asked for a study on respiratory disease here. And there was a small one done that said, 'yes, there's a lot of problems here.' And we basically blamed the dust for it, because there were a lot of chemicals in the dust that were bad, that we knew of."

"There was a man by the name of (b) (6) that lived by the school. And he was in. . . he moved. He sold his house and moved because of the respiratory problems. . . And he fought it. You know he went to the meetings and said, 'Look at me man. I'm having to carry oxygen around.'"

"What was really interesting was the tension between the people. The social aspect. . . People were always in conflict because of the mine. . . People got into big fights over Molycorp. And then people started healing when Molycorp closed. And then, you know. . . people are trying to mend relationships and it's very slow healing. And basically that was the main, what do you call it, fall out of it. That people were. . . It brought a lot of hate and animosity to town."

SG: . . . And if there are any questions you don't want to answer, feel free to. . . .

(b) (6) To say no.

SG: Yeah.

(b) (6) Okay. So where do you want to start.

SG: Um. Well, just about Questa. Well basically we can start with how long you've been here? And maybe some of the changes you've noticed over time. And then changes with the water, the river, with Molycorp coming. What happened?

(b) (6) Okay. Well Molycorp has been around since like 1924 or something like that. In fact my grandfather was one of the first miners at Molycorp. And in those days it was just basically ground work. You know, you go in and you pick and shovel and then you fill your little cart and then you push it out. And then it gets taken to the, to the, uh, mill, ground up and then whatever they did with it there. My mother was raised in Molycorp. Molycorp had a school for the employees and the employees children. So my mom was raised up in Molycorp. And from there, my mom came. And actually, my grandfather started off as a miner there. He was a sheep herder in his older days and took care of family and stuff. But then when New Mexico became a state. Before that, my grandfather said that the mountains belonged to everybody. Everybody had a section where they took their sheep and their cattle for the summer, and did that. And, you know, everybody farmed and basically had subsistence living. You cut firewood, you built your house, you farm a garden, you grow animals, and then you store up for the winter. And then all winter, you didn't do anything. You just basically lived, which was the ideal situation. Um, the coming of Molycorp brought a lot of. . . It kind of changed the lifestyle in that people started working for something else, for somebody else. Instead of doing what they generally did. Not

everybody went up there. But, a lot of. . . . In those days, it was hard to make a living. It was like two or three dollars a day labor. That's how people used to live. And, you know, it was very very difficult. Um, but when Molycorp came, they provided jobs for those people who wanted to or learned how to mine and did mine. So it changed, it took, it kind of separated the family a little bit in that it took the men away from the family unit. Out to the mine through out the day, or what ever shifts they worked. And they came and they still worked at home doing catching up doing whatever they were doing. But in this case, the women ended up doing some of the work they weren't customarily used to doing. The work that men did. My father was, he was the youngest male of his family. And his brothers went to the military or whatever. So he, he stayed home to take care of my grandmom and help my grandmom. He was ten or twelve years old at the time. And he got by gardening and selling chickens and selling cheese. Selling eggs. And just different things to help the family. And raising, they would raise sheep and cattle also, up in the mountains, bring them down and whatever it took to work with them. My grandfather on my dad's he was the same. He was a sheep herder most of his life. And that's basically what he did. He would go to Wyoming, Colorado. Both of my grandfathers did actually. Wyoming, Colorado for the summer and then come back for the winter. So basically, my grandmother raised he kids on their own through out the summer. And then the men were back. People from here would migrate to Colorado to work on the farms, migrant working. I mean they weren't migrant workers. But they, they actually went up and worked in the fields. The would harvest. Everything was done by hand. The planting, the harvesting, the sorting of potatoes, beets, all that stuff was done by hand. So that was the work provided. And not just men. It was kids. People that were. . . . When I was in the third grade. So this was probably back in 1957, no. . . 1960 even. Kids in my class got to, their parents were this kind of workers, this kind of farm workers. So kids in my class would take off to go work. And that's what they did. They picked potatoes and whatever field work was required, that's what they did. And it was hard, back-breaking work. And you, they were allowed to leave for a couple of months for school. And come back and continue their education. Needless to say, they would fall behind because of it. So those of us that stayed and got our education, at least we envied them sometimes because we wanted to go. And my dad, he would never let me go. I always wanted to go. Yeah, get out of school. But. . . And it was a wise decision not to let us go. We were basically a. . . . You know it's really amazing the ways Questa has changed. Because in those days, because of the mercantile and how things were brought into Questa, there was several people who had stores. That people who had money, or who could afford to bring stuff would put a little store some place. And there was a lot of stores in Questa. And then, when this thing happened that Moly came in, a lot of people just didn't do anything. They were allowed. . . they were now able to go bring their stuff from other places. They would go to Colorado. They would go to Taos. A lot of people migrated from here to Colorado, Denver, Colorado Springs, following the mines. Arizona, the copper mines. I don't know why people took on mining, but that's what they learned here so that's what they took with them and that's what they did.

SG: So they didn't stay here and mine? They just went to different mines.

(b) (6) Yeah. A lot of people went to different mines. And see, this mine was not that big at the time. It was underground for many years. And then they went open pit in the sixties. When they went open pit, they had probably 900 people working, so everybody came home. The town grew.

We had trailer parks all over town. Molycorp had trailer parks themselves built. . . I don't know if you know where Columbine park is, but this side of Columbine park, they had these huge trailer parks for the employees, huge. They built for housing for them, for employees. So that helped. Red River grew because of that also. And then Taos. The labor force wasn't big enough. So they brought people from Taos, Penasco, San Luis. All the surrounding areas filled the labor pool. And so it kind of increased the economy of Questa and it helped it quite a bit. Questa put in a water system. And this was just in the seventies that we put in a water system. Everybody was on wells or hauling water. Hand wells or electric wells and hauling water. And sewer systems were just a cess pool or a septic tank. Which is still real popular. But now in the eighties we put in a sewer system to help because of the pollution. Um, So when Molycorp went open pit, the production was just huge. I mean they were. . . I don't know if you had a chance to go up to the pit. You should take a tour to go see it.

SG: I've seen it from the outside, but I haven't gone inside.

(b) (6) They'll give you a tour. You should go and ask for a tour of it so you can see the enormity of it. In fact I went to see it for the first time a few years ago. I had never seen it either. And this thing is like the biggest hole in the ground that you ever saw. So the one thing that we wanted; why don't you put the waste in the pit? I mean what's wrong with it. And they said, no, no, you endanger the lives of the miners that are now underground. When they closed the pit, now they said their going back underground because of where the ore is. We need to access it easier. Well one of the things that happened is that when they did the pit, they did it too steep. So they couldn't. . . the shelves, they were going too fast down. So they didn't build the shelves properly. So the thing caved in on them. They lost a huge steam shovel in there that was like millions of dollars because of this. So then, at that time Molycorp closed. Moly was probably thirty, forty dollars a pound. They were making good money. Moly dropped. They closed the mine in '89.

SG: Because the price went down.

(b) (6) Because the price of the ore, it wasn't worth anything. But they couldn't close the mine because if they closed, they had to clean up. So they kind of kept a skeleton crew open, security and whatever. So when they opened back up, they had already done a lot of core drilling to sample the earth for moly. And they found rich pockets of ore that they could tap. But it was better to come in underground. So they built this huge cement, um, what do they call that thing. Anyway, that big building—it's an elevator shaft, actually, is what it is. That they used to take equipment and men down to the bottom and back up. So anyway, so they went back underground. And at they time, they were really going to boost production because of the ore they had found was of such a good quality. Price of the ore was still up to where they could make money. So at that time we said why don't you dump it into the pit- the waste. Because at that time, they had already over run- the tailings dam that they have here had been filled to capacity. And they were now talking about taking Guadalupe Mountain, because it was a natural bowl. So they said this is the only place we could go. So at that time we decided well we will fight and we want it taken to the pit. So we fought for the pit and we got all kinds of excuses. Like what happens if at one time the ore, this low grade ore that is in the pit is worth a lot of

money. Then we won't have access to it. You endanger the lives of the men that are underground because you're going to be dumping this stuff in there wet and it can just break down or something. So we told them, well why don't you, why don't you do a dryer. We told them, we can get engineers or you have your own engineers that will help you design a solar dryer. So we figured you can dry it. One you separate the ore, put it on a solar conveyor belt that was open to the sun. That would dry it by the time you got it to the pit. And just dump it dry in the pit. Well that didn't work. That was a stupid idea as far as they were concerned. That's a stupid idea. Okay, well that's fine. So then we said, 'so what are you going to do?' Well, they wanted Guadalupe. And that time. . . During the time they wanted Guadalupe, they really agitated the workers. They told them, 'Okay. We don't get this Guadalupe site, we'll close the mine. So we need support for us.' So people were up in arms supporting Moly because of the Guadalupe site. That's when we came in and said, okay, you go to the Guadalupe site. What about the Río Grande? Now you're going to pollute that. You've already polluted the Red River. Now you want to pollute the Río Grande.

SG: What year was this that they wanted to go to Guadalupe?

(b) (6) This was in 19, probably in the late 80s and early 90s is when they wanted that. 'Cause it was 1988 I think which was the last year that I was on the counsel. And they were already talking about that. So, we fought it hard enough that they had to drill test wells in Guadalupe. Drill well down, and put some dye in the well to see where the water would go. If it all would come out in the Río Grande. And it was so. . . They said it was a natural cavern and that it wouldn't hurt. But actually it did. It was going to show pollution. So we fought even harder. We said no way. But at the time. . . . So what happened then was the price of the ore dropped so fast, so bad, that they basically shut down the mine. They said, okay, it's not worth producing moly anymore. So they shut it down. Flooded the mine. Underground. Cause they said this is it. We're gonna close down forever. So they flooded it. And left equipment down there. One of them being a conveyor belt, that has since broken, costing millions of dollars to repair and replace. At this same time, the cold war basically ended. So the fall apart of the Soviet Union and whatever. See, in the Soviet Union, that was one of the big producers of moly. And they had big stockpiles of it so they dumped it all in the market. That's one of the reasons the ore fell so bad. So Molycorp couldn't compete. I mean, you know, you're paying people fifteen, twenty dollars an hour, versus two or three dollars a day in Russia. So they could afford to dump the ore for whatever they got. And they did. They dumped it and there was a glut of the ore. And so Molycorp said that's it, close her down. Union Oil did. And so they closed it down, and basically that was it until that ore ran out. So when that ore ran out. And then you got wars breaking out, and the need for steel hardeners, lubricants or whatever moly is used. The need for that increased. The demand for that increased. So the price of the ore went up again.

SG: Do you know when that was around?

(b) (6) That was just recently in the last four or five years, you know.

SG: The ore in Russia ran out?

(b) (6) Yeah. Well they weren't mining it anymore. But they had huge stockpiles so they just dumped it. And then there was South America. And then there was Climax in Colorado that closed. Because they were cited with EPA, I mean Superfund pollution. They were told, 'Hey, you guys clean it up or shut it down.' And the basically just shut it down I think. Anyway, so then this was the only mine, one of the few mines left that was not, supposedly not, not in writing, in total complete violation of whatever they could be. So they decided, well we're easy enough to start up. They figured that with two hundred and fifty million dollars, they could start up again. So the dumped two hundred and fifty million dollars into it. That didn't do it. They needed probably another two hundred and fifty million to get in back up and going. So they cleaned it up and started it up again. And the price of the ore, it's not that great. I think they're getting four or five dollars a pound. And I think that it's still feasible if, if they can keep their overhead down. So what they've done, they cut down the crew. They moved people from here. From the mill down under ground. Basically, the mechanic pool was small. And equipment investment was limited to where they were leasing equipment instead of buying it. So they opened with a small scale operation, hit the ore. And then, they had a big problem in that they let in flood so long, hadn't done any retaining work, that it caved in. Right from the [inaudible]. The mine caved in.

SG: The open pit.

(b) (6) No. The underground. The mountain was hollowed out from where they were mining. The moisture from the top caved it in. And it caved it in right where they were ready to. . . right where they run their track. See way. . . I don't know if you're familiar with how they extract the ore. But they have a track system that goes down in what they call grizzlies, which are like big big holes. They're like a big pot that holds the ore. A train comes underneath. They open this gate and it fills the train. And then the train comes back up, dumps it in the conveyor belt. And that takes it back up to the crusher which crushes it and sends it down to the mill. So they the cave in happened right on their tracks. And it was a major cave—in.

SG: Were there any people there.

(b) (6) Well, there were. . . actually there's been a few accidents and I wouldn't be one to document them. But there were a few accidents. People were injured. I don't know if they were related to the cave in. I know of one that was, where I guy was trapped trying to open the grizzly because it was jammed. And he was flooded with gravel and whatever and mud. So he was. . . they saved his life, but he pretty traumatized. Anyway, so then that stopped production because they couldn't get the ore. They had to go around it. And that took more time. So at the time, Union Oil said 'Now what. You need more money to do this work. We don't want to throw any more money in. You need to figure out.' So they decided, will we bring in a crew from outside, a subcontractor to do it. Or will we do it ourselves? So those were decisions being made. How are we going to do it? Meantime, Amigos Bravos, Concerned Citizens, a lot of people are concerned about the major pumping of the mine. The underground mine had to be pumped. Where is all this water going? At that same time, the ionization plant was shut off. Which was a big farce over there.

SG: What was the ionization plant?

(b) (6) That was the thing that cleaned the water before it went in the river. And that thing wasn't working properly or wasn't even working. And so they were, at the time that's when they were polluting the river bad. So this thing was being documented. Okay, let's check all the monitoring wells. People's water systems were being contaminated down in Embargo. So they had to clean that up. They had to. . . well.

SG: Did Molycorp clean this up or did people?

(b) (6) No. Molycorp had to clean it up. They hooked people up the water system. And at the same time they said, 'Well, we'll settle out of court.' They settled out of court, some lawsuits out of court. So it's not public information as to what exactly happened. But it was polluted. It was during the time that this case was being fought, they came up with a lot of crap that was really bad. That water was bad, real bad. And so part of the agreement was, we'll install monitoring wells. We'll get those things read on a weekly basis. Any violations will be cited. Molycorp lined all their tailing pipe, which were steel. They replaced them with. . . I think they invested a million dollars in bringing in rubber lined pipe, to keep it from wearing the pipe so fast and breaking into the river. They moved the tailings pipe from next to the river to the other side of the road. So that if it broke, they would have a little bit of a chance to stop it before it went into the river.

SG: You have to go across the street first.

(b) (6) Yeah. Now it has to cross the street. So, all in all, it was like this big thing about. . . Okay, now we know about it. You know, are you going to admit that you're polluting the water or not. No we're not. We don't feel that we're polluting the water. So we brought in all these water study guys from EID or independent researchers that took samples. We brought the game and fish in. There's no aquatic life in the river. The only fish there are the stockers. And they'll live till what they live. And that's it. There's no fish being hatched in the river. Okay. So that brought in Amigos Bravos pretty nasty. They said okay now this is really serious. We asked that they clean the river from the mine, down to the Río Grande. That's never been done. The irrigation system. Some of the spills that they had flooded the *acequias* very heavily. Into where it got into people's properties. And that was a clean up. They had a clean up down in (b) (6) (b) (6) territory. (b) (6) All that in Embargo. The Embargo area was basically pretty badly polluted. So they had to clean all that up. They did clean it all up. And I guess, I don't know what kind of settlements or agreements that came with for those people. But that was pretty major. There's a lot of pictures and stuff of that.

SG: Do you know how it affected those people? Like, um if it flooded their irrigation system, what did that do for their. . . .

(b) (6) Well you know, see at first people got pretty irate about it. And then they said we're gonna file law suits, this and that. But then at the same time, Molycorp came in and said 'look why don't you let us clean it up. Restore it to it's original. And we'll help you re-seed. Whatever

you need to do.' And basically a lot of people agreed with that. They felt that that was compensation enough. So they, on an individual basis. The rest of the people that felt that it was bad basically took it as an opportunity to bring in new screws and show that this is a company that just doesn't care. You know, they're just doing this right and left. But then they did clean up and it seems that the people were pretty much satisfied. I don't know. See that's one of the things. These people won't discuss it with you because they has some kind of a hush-hush agreement. So on an individual basis that happened. My dad and his brothers and brother-in-law had some land over here that was polluted once. Molycorp cleaned it up. The second time they spilled into it, they bought the land. They said, 'No. We don't want to be a liability ever again.' So they bought the land. As far as the economy is concerned, it has. It has really boosted the economy. People, people in Questa were coming back. Because when the mine closed, a lot of people left. They did provide displaced miner training. A lot of these guys got good training. We got some electricians, carpenters, plumbers.

SG: Was that after they were laid off?

(b) (6) After they were laid off. The last time they were laid off, they were basically through government agency and through government help and through Molycorp of through Union Oil, they provided some schooling for these people. Which was great. A lot of people learned new trades. And a lot of them stayed away from the mines. When they opened again, they said, 'well we don't know how it's going to last. So we won't go back. We'll stay doing what we're doing.' And there's a lot of people who are now successful businesspeople because of this. But still at the same time, a lot of them did go back. They were doing something and they said 'no, I'm going back.' And so they went back. And, you know, so they're still up there. They bought out a lot of early retirees and trying to keep their budget down. One of the things that Molycorp did that was real interesting was that at the time, there were a lot of *artesanos* in Questa. People who could do stuff with their hands. Well when they when they went to work for Moly, they didn't have to do stuff. Because now they were able to make good money. I mean Moly paid good money. In the seventies, people were making big money. I mean twenty, thirty dollars and hour, which was unheard of. I mean they were union, full union that was very very strong.

SG: Was that for the more skilled jobs? Or just for. . . .

(b) (6) No. Everybody was union. And they came in at good pay. The miner was always making the bigger money, the guy that was down in the hole. But everybody else was also making good money. I don't think I heard any complaint about the money that they made. The funny this is, when the mine closed, there was still the pollution issue to deal with. Okay. Now what? Now who's gonna take care of the dam. The wind was blowing, the dust was flying. There was no more pollution as far as the as the tailings pipe running any slurry.

SG: Oh. Because it wasn't producing.

(b) (6) Right. Because it wasn't producing. But it was still unsightly. I mean the pipes on the side of the road or whatever. But the dam was the main concern. What are we going to do about the dam. So they came in and they hired a contractor to cover the dam entirely. So this guy came in.

They milled a bunch of rock and ore. Covered in up with top soil, or what ever they did. And planted grasses and weeds or different things to grow. And they did a good job. Basically, everything seems okay. Okay. Fine. And now that they opened again, we don't have a place to dump. What are we going to do. So what they decided to do was to lift the levy. Make it bigger, so that they could increase the capacity of the existing dam. So that was done.

SG: When was that? Recently?

(b) (6) Yeah. Within the last two or three years. They've been doing this. They raised the dam, the brim of the dam, all the way around which increased the capacities to do that. And so that's what they've been doing now. I haven't kept up with lately. Because for me, it was a real heads on battle in those days. No matter who I talked to, it was always an argument with somebody about something. We spent a lot of time going to the Santa Fe EID, EPA, meeting with these people, meeting with Molycorp and the attorneys. And they brought in environmentalists to help them clean up. So now it's kind of a small time operation, basically, compared to what it used to be. And I don't know. Now they have to deal with the clean up. See, they're being cited now for all the overflow from all the rain and stuff that carries those minerals into the river. But it's too late now. See, there's nothing you can do about that now. Unless they move everything out. And the only thing they can do is move it all to the pit. Clean it all up to it's original state, and go from there. I don't know. So a lot of people, they were able to get ahead. You know people, they earned stock from Moly. When they retired or when the quit, Moly bought their stock, or Union Oil bought their stock at a really go price. They made some good money with it. It was during the time that T-Bone Pickens was trying to take over Union Oil. He offered billions for Union Oil stock. And it was a perfect time for the guys who had stock to sell their stock. It was up to seventy something dollars a share, which was really unheard of. So everybody sold their stock. Cleaned out, checked out and got some good money. People went to education, people went to. A lot of people who moved away from town are still gone from town. They don't want to come back. You know, they've changed their lifestyle. You know, they tasted city living. They tasted good jobs. A lot of government jobs. A lot of, what do you call it, you know, secondary education. People have gone to college.

SG: Like more professional.

(b) (6) Yeah. Like more professional jobs.

SG: Were these former mine workers?

(b) (6) A lot of these mine workers have gone and done that. They found out that did have other skills, that they basically did not have to stay in the mines. See, a lot of people thought all I'm ever going to do is be a miner. They were afraid. They were afraid to move on, to try anything else. They wouldn't do it. But when they were hit with the finality of Molycorp closing, there was not option. Unemployment, for what, six months. Reserves that they might have had. And at the time, Ski Río opened. Five-dollar-an-hour jobs, four-dollars, minimum wage jobs. People went there, worked there for a winter. Then that unemployment ran out. Then the displaced miner thing kicked in. People learned new trades, new skills, moved away. A lot of them moved

to Silver City, where there's mining. Colorado, following the mines up there. Arizona to the copper mines. So a lot of people stayed in mining because of a lot of the skills or jobs related to mining: mechanics, you know, those kinds of things that they need, electricians. The gold mine in San Luis opened. A few guys went up there. That has since closed. Those guys are back at Moly. And there's still a lot of people that are back at Moly. And will probably retire at Moly. Then go back to. . . I think we might just go back to agriculture. A lot of people are going back to agriculture. They're seeing that that was a good way of life. Especially if you can subsidize it somehow, which is by working part time. Women are now working a lot more, when they didn't work at all. Red River provides a lot of jobs. The cleaning jobs or whatever, the clerks. But there are a few jobs up there. There's jobs in Taos. The school system provides a lot of jobs. Businesses provide jobs. But basically, I think that people get into education. That's the key. Through the *Artesanos*, we're now doing a welfare to work program. We're doing that. We started the Artesanos when the mine closed, in 1989. We felt that people could do things with their hands, and survive. And a lot of people have. We have a lot of artesanos who are doing really great. So we brought the cultural center and provide service for anybody who wants to come. We teach people crafts. Tin works, stain glass, wood working, there's a sewing group. There's all kinds of stuff to learn. And people are doing. So basically, it depends on what lifestyle you want. The economy is not that great because of taxes being so high, and all that stuff.

SG: Yeah. Well when is that not the case.

(b) (6) That's the truth.

SG: So we know that there is all this pollution. Do you have any idea on how this had any impact on people's health or things like that.

(b) (6) Oh yeah. You know we have a high incidence of cancer, respiratory disease. And, uh, we had actually asked for a study on respiratory disease here. And there was a small one done that said, 'Yes. there's a lot of problems here.' And we basically blamed the dust for it, because there were a lot of chemicals in the dust that were bad, that we knew of.

SG: Is that Concerned Citizens that asked for that? Or just the community?

(b) (6) Well Concerned Citizens. We originally asked for it. We asked the CID is it?

SG: Center for Disease Control. CDC.

(b) (6) Yeah. Those are the people that came in and said they would do a study.

SG: Oh. They did do a study.

(b) (6) The State Health Department. It was actually the State Health Department that did. And they concluded that we had a high respiratory problem.

SG: Do you know when they did that study.

(b) (6) Oh I don't. It's probably been a few years. I really don't. But the people at the health center would probably. And they. . . to get information from this is gonna be like pulling teeth. I don't think they'll give you any information. See one of the bad things about coming around, asking stuff about Moly. You're gonna get people who are going to tell you, 'what the hell do you want.' Because I, and being here all my life, I've been through it. And any time an outsider comes in, looking for information, it's like one of those things. 'I don't know and I don't care. Who are you to come here and tell us how to live.' That thing happens all the time. But there are. . . We had. You know I should have been looking for these papers for you. I had. . . One of my cousin's is a doctor. She did some work for us on certain pollutants in the air, and how they affect people. Conclusion: definitely bad. One of my friends is a doctor in Arizona and he did a paper on some of the pollutants also, concluding the same thing. If you have a high incidence of this, well sure you're going to have a high incidence of this kind of respiratory problem. And we did. The school was right there. Can you imagine. Can you imagine canceling the state final championship baseball game because of the dust blowing in the field and they couldn't see. I mean that was. . . you know that was uncalled for. The school being there, the kids marched out of school to protest. Because the couldn't. . . if you went to school and ran your hand across the desk, it was dusty dusty from the pollution from the mine.

SG: Do you know if any of the kids were getting sick?

(b) (6) Oh yeah. There was a lot of kids that were getting sick. And probably. Let me see who was there at the time. (b) (6) was the doctor in charge of the clinic then. And he basically had some stuff done that would help you get some information. The school board at the time had a study done, because they were concerned. And they were told, well either close down the school, or put pressure on the mine to clean it up—to settle the dust.

SG: Who told them to close down the school?

(b) (6) Well they were told by the state. You know, if you can't provide a clean environment, what can you do? That's why we have a new high school. They moved the school from there. Um, so, basically yes. People have been adversely affected. And I think the main conclusion being that Molycorp has come to understand that they have to keep it clean in order to work. For it can work. They can mine and they can keep the environment clean at the same time if they make an effort. It might cost them money. But at the same time, you're not going to get a lot of people griping at you because you're polluting so bad.

SG: You won't get lawsuits.

(b) (6) Yeah. I mean, so it's important that they do that. That they keep it clean. One of the things. See, before they opened again, I met with Molycorp. And they asked me to support them. And I told them, the only way I'll support you is if you keep it clean. I mean, no more spills, keep the dust down. You know, environmental concerns and health concerns are number one priority. The water is important. See, one of the things is, the river gets polluted here. So we're

responsible to the people down the river for bad water. So what do they they say. Well those people up in Questa didn't care. That's how come the river is so bad. And when in actuality, in all actuality, we at the day one, we started caring. And we immediately thought, okay we'll get the EID, the EPA involved. That way, they'll immediately be told to keep it clean. But they weren't. So it's been a long battle. Pretty interesting.

SG: Do you think it will be solved?

(b) (6) I don't think it will. It's just one of those hazards that has happened. Maybe nature will clean it with in a hundred years. But I don't think so.

SG: Not anytime soon.

(b) (6) Not anytime soon. Unless. . . we were even brave enough to ask them to move the tailings. Why don't you build a railroad up to the pit. And start trucking all these tailings that are already dry, back, and dump it in the pit, so we can clean up this area. That was stupid they said. So then we asked them, all your tailings from now on in the pit. You're not going to use it anymore. Let's do it.

SG: Seems like that would be cheaper since it's right there.

(b) (6) Oh yeah. I just don't understand why that was. . . I think that it was one of those things that where there's people that you can't tell anything, you can't give them an idea. If it wasn't there idea then it is no good. So we pushed for that, and that never happened. And there it is. It's still the big big hole in the mountain. That, I don't know, maybe that could use it for the New York dumps. They're always looking for some place to dump, instead of out in the ocean. They could probably truck it here and dump it here. But you know, I always thought that that was the main thing. To me, that what recycle meant. You take it out of the hole, you put it back in the hole. But it never did work out that way. It was easier for stuff to flow down hill than it was for it to go uphill. So they sent it downhill. The main thing that really bothered me was they were using water to transport the waste. I mean that was it. Then supposedly they were gonna dump clean water back in the river. That never happened. So there was a lot of wasted water. Molycorp hold more water rights than anybody in northern New Mexico. Thousands of acre feet of water. They bought a lot of property in Questa just for the water rights, to be able to use water for their milling process, floatation, and then to transport the waste down. They needed water to do that.

SG: So what did they do in a dry year?

(b) (6) Well they have wells, see. And that's one of the bad things. They tap the aquifer and so that means that people down stream aren't going to be getting water. They have depleted the aquifer. It's been. . . It's amazing. It would be an interesting question. How many wells does Molycorp have? Can you imagine. And they're not little wells. You can go up the canyon and you'll find Molycorp wells that are 10 inch, 12 inch, 20 inch, um, what do call it.

SG: Diameter?

(b) (6) Um, casing. And pumps that pump thousands and thousands of gallons a minute for their use. You really need to get a tour. If you haven't toured it. Have you toured it all?

SG: No, I haven't. I've driven past it. I have some free time today. Maybe I'll do that.

(b) (6) You know, you might want to tour. You go across the Old River Bridge. You go east on a dirt road, you go up the hill, well. . . You can just drive up there and check out where they had a tailings dump, where they caught. Whenever the line would break, they would dump it all into this dump. Sump dump they call it. To try to keep it from going into the river. And that's a mess, a huge mess. And they cleaned it up. But right now its a mess. And then, if you get a chance, you might want to get an appointment to get a tour of the mine.

SG: Yeah. I called them once. They never returned my call.

(b) (6) Is that right? That's not very nice.

SG: No. It's not.

(b) (6) You know, they should give you a tour. They were willing to give me a tour and said that they were willing to give anybody a tour. Fernando Martinez would be your contact person. He can help you with a tour, and give you the spiff on how good they're doing.

SG: I'd like to hear that.

(b) (6) Yeah, he can show you. . . He can show you all the things they're trying to do to repair all the damage. You know, he'll show you the monitoring wells, where he has to sample on a daily basis. He'll take you and show you where all the open pit is. And what they've done. They had to do it. It's mandatory now. Now it's mandatory. Do you want to get hit with superfund, or what? So now they're having to clean up. Which is great. I'm glad that they're cleaning up. It would have been nice if it would have been done on a voluntary basis. But eventually, it's gonna have to get done. I wish it would happen. But it's just too big. There is no way, in this day and age, anybody can invest that kind of money to clean up that kind of a mess. It's just too big of a mess. It's just a cover it over, plant grass, and hopefully it'll quiet down because people aren't going to know. You know what I mean. New people are going to be coming, or younger people are going to grow up and they don't even know what it is. What is that over there. What was Turquoise Lake. You know. Tell me what Turquoise Lake was. So you know where Turquoise Lake is? And there might not be any people that know. But there's people that do know. So, I don't know. Any other questions you have?

SG: That's basically it. I mean you've told me a lot. You gave me a name of (b) (6) a doctor. Is he still in town?

(b) (6) He's not in Questa. He's in Taos.

SG: And he did. . . .

(b) (6) He was involved in a respiratory study. You know, he was given the conclusions of. It might even be in their archives down in the health center. But I don't know. . . .

SG: If I can get a hold of 'em?

(b) (6) If you can get a hold of them. You know, I should look for this information I have. I have. The person to talk to is (b) (6) Have you talked to (b) (6) He has a lot of information. Um, (b) (6) I mean these are the old Concerned Citizens. We kind of used to keep track of all that stuff. I've got a box with a bunch of stuff there in that shop.

SG: If you ever have a chance to dig it up, that'd be. . . .

(b) (6) You know, do you have a card? Why don't you give me one of your cards. And that way, I'll dig up some of this information for you. And you can kind of read it and come to your own conclusion you know. Because it was a lot of lies, a lot of truths, a lot of. . . you know, kind of stuff that has come out. This was bad, this was bad, now it's good, this is bad. So there's a lot of be done yet.

SG: Do you know any people that have had any personal experiences. Or do you have any personal experiences about the health concerns of this pollution or things like that. Because I think that would help.

(b) (6) Oh. The people that I was gonna say have died. There was a man by the name of (b) (6) (b) (6) that lived by the school. And he was in. . . he moved. He sold his house and moved because of the respiratory problems. I don't know where he lives. But some people in town might know. I don't know where he lives to tell you the truth. And he fought it. You know he went to the meetings and said, 'Look at me man. I'm having to carry oxygen around.' He was one of those people.

SG: Was he a part of Concerned Citizens?

(b) (6) No.

SG: Just a concerned citizen in general.

(b) (6) Yeah. And basically that's what we were. You know. If you wanted to sign a petition to us you were a concerned citizen. And we did. We circulated a petition and collected 900 names, with a list of ten concerns we had. Number one, clean water. Number two, clean air. Number three, the health and the safety of our children. . . The rivers. And you know, everything. And basically, that's all we wanted. From there it went. You know, give me a minute. Let me see if I can find that box for you.

SG: Okay

[Stop tape]

[Start tape]

(b) (6) What was really interesting was the tension between the people. That, socially speaking. . . it was really hard on people, you know. People were wondering who was making what. My brother does this, my brother does that. This guy works up at the mine. This guy doesn't work at the mine. And so people were always in conflict because of the mining. It was pretty tough. Very, very tough. Basically after reading that information, you'll find that. There was a socio-economic study done also. And I don't know where that copy is. I'd have to go through a stack this big to find it [makes a gesture signifying a two foot high stack].

SG: Do you know who did it?

(b) (6) Um, it was done by. . . the guys name was (b) (6) And it was done by this firm in Santa Fe. And what they basically did was. . . it was a big phony study actually. It was done for Molycorp, because at the time, they were pushing for more land, more water, and the tailings dam and all this and all that. Because they needed this and that. The community was going to grow. You're going to get so many more houses, so many more people. The schools will have to grow. You're going to get so many more students. So they did this socio-economic study. And it was a farce. It was a piece of crap. It's some place.

SG: Maybe Molycorp has it?

(b) (6) The village should have it. I don't know if they. It would take forever to find it because of when it was done. When was it done. . . it was done. . . Golly, it was done in 80. . . in the early eighties. I might. . . I don't know that I could find it.

SG: I'll look for it. If you happen to stumble upon it.

(b) (6) So basically what you're going to find out is that people had big fights over Molycorp. And then people started healing when Molycorp closed. And then, you know. . . people are trying to mend relationships and it's very slow healing. And basically that was the main, what do you call it, fall out of it. That people were. . . It brought a lot of hate and animosity to town. Real bad. But hopefully people will grow out of it and we'll become a community again.

SG: Thanks again for all your help.

MR: It was my pleasure in deed.

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultants: [redacted] (pseudonyms)
Address: Address is already entered into computer under true names. The couple wishes to remain anonymous for legal reasons.
Date: July 29, 1998
Time: 7 PM
Interview Location: Their home in Questa
Watershed Discussed: Red River

Interview: (note: Due to past conflicts with Molycorp, this couple prefers to remain anonymous and would not allow the interview to be taped)

[redacted] had a lawsuit against Molycorp and Unocal in 1988 for water contamination.

In the 1960's Molycorp started taking water samples from wells in Questa and by 1988 they told the [redacted] that their well water was contaminated.

In 1976 the [redacted] had drilled their own well, and Molycorp wanted them to connect to the village. They refused to connect because they felt like it was a waste of money. They asked the mine to let them know, however, if the water quality was bad or polluted. It wasn't until 1988 that the mine notified the [redacted] that their water was indeed contaminated. "The EPA and the state EID[Environmental Improvement Division] already knew."

"They [Unocal] settled out of court, so I know it's contaminated."

[redacted] They settled out of court so people would not know about contamination?

"That's the main reason."

" I have an agreement with Moly not to give out information."

"People in the community are afraid to lose their jobs, their bread and butter...it's very scary."

"The tailings should be active for twenty years," so what does that mean for contamination?

The tailings come out right up the hill from the [redacted] There is a seepage gravity flow to where the well was and probably seepage into the ground water.

Aside from well contamination, the [redacted] have witnessed devastating effects of river contamination. His son who owns cattle noticed a few years back that his cows were not growing or gaining weight. They decided to sent a blood sample to a veterinarian who found a high

concentration of aluminum and molybdenum in the blood serum. And a result of the high concentration of those metals no copper was detected in the test.
The [redacted] decided to get a second opinion from a veterinarian in Colorado. The results were identical. The veterinarian then suggested that when the cow died that they should send the liver to the department of agriculture to be inspected.

"Where did the cow get these." Either the water or the soil.
Mr. [redacted] asked, "Is my family getting the same thing [aluminum/molybdenum]?"

The [redacted] irrigate with water which comes from the Red River Canyon where there is a headgate for the acequia. Mr. [redacted] property lies at the end of that particular ditch.

"Every time I go to Santa Fe I take papers about the cow and talk to the Health Department to see if it's good for human consumption."

"The Department of Agriculture has no record of aluminum in an animal."
"The EPA has reports that aluminum is not poisonous, but I believe it is a toxin."

"Even with the lawsuit we couldn't get an answer about the metals."

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: [redacted]
Address: [redacted]
Date: July 22, 1998
Time: 2 PM
Interview Location: [redacted] Wood Shop, Questa
Watershed Discussed: Red River

Interview Participants:
[redacted]

Interview:
[redacted] I'm wondering how Questa used to be a long time ago, your memories of the town and growing up here. And, I think I know that you're from Questa originally. Is that true?

[redacted] Lifelong, yes.

[redacted] And have you always been living in the same house and everything or have you moved around?

[redacted] I've moved around, except for the past ten years.

[redacted] You've been in the same place for the past ten years?

[redacted] Yes

[redacted] If you could just give me an idea of what the town was like when you were growing up. Was it very populated, or was there a lot going on? What you remember about it.

[redacted] No it wasn't very populated. There wasn't a lot of activity here in Questa. Back when I was growing up. I lot of people made a living- a lot of people worked in Red River just as they do now. People worked in construction, in the schools, almost the same except until the mine came in, but basically a few of the buildings in town have been renovated. But all in all I always say that considering the kind of money that Molycorp is making or claims to put into the community, you don't see a lot of growth from people that are working here. I mean like myself, I mean I put this building together but not with money from the mine. And there's other buildings that have been established-other businesses, but these are not mine employees, so In terms of what the benefits have been from the mine, I see really minimal. In terms of that. I know that they've donated some monies to different projects to the village.

[redacted] What kinds of projects have they donated money for?

(b) (6) I think, uh, the lights, street lights, a bridge going down Embargo Road, there's a bridge, some of the water expansion projects, things like that. To what extent I don't know, but you know, those are things that come up every time there are discussions about how people feel about the mine there are mine supporters who bring things up like those. But look at the other side of the coin, in terms of the contamination that we have, that's pretty major. That's a big impact: negatively.

(b) (6) In terms of the lay of the town and the buildings and the kinds of things that are built here, it's not that different from when you were growing up?

(b) (6) No, it's a little bit bigger, now because through the Artesanos and the efforts of other community members, we're trying to take advantage of the number one industry which is tourism. We're trying to stop some of the dollars which are crossing our town and it's working. I think that more and more we're getting more into that type of industry than before.

(b) (6) So, a lot of people see tourism as a positive way to make a living.?

(b) (6) Definitely, there's no doubt that tourism's a major contributor in this area as well as anywhere else. I don't know where- we're in the enchanted circle, and I think we should try to benefit from that. For many years I used to here that Questa was a mining community, so everybody- we weren't given a choice- we're a mining community- take it or leave it. You know that was a very strong mentality a few years ago. But now, it's kind of changing.

(b) (6) People who come here from other places- they know that there's more going on here than mining?

(b) (6) Yes, and not only people from elsewhere but the local people are beginning to see that the mine can shut down any minute, any day, just like it's happened before, and so... you know, I've talked to a few miners and their not secure, I mean, they don't feel secure, not like twenty years ago when the mine was mine was operating for ten years straight and it was a strong employer.

(b) (6) But, now people are worried that they're gonna get laid off or that the mine will actually stop?

(b) (6) Yeah, that's what's in people's minds all the time. And it's a reality, and it's -we're looking at. so that . you know, we don't depend fully on that job and then get laid off and lose what you thought you had..

(b) (6) Do you know if people who are employed in the mine- have they ever made demands to the company or do they ever get organized in a union or something like that?

(b) (6) I doubt it. Right now, I think everyone that works at the mine is at the mercy of the mine and they have no say so. They don't have a union. I mean the union was broken down years ago.

(b) (6) There used to be a union?

(b) (6) Yes, and it was a good, strong union, bu they you know, corporations or big companies, they work toward breaking a union, and eventually it broke down.

(b) (6) Do you know when that happened?

(b) (6) I don't know exactly, but there was a strike by the union. It must have been in the late seventies maybe. That was the first strike, and then I think from there, the company weakened the union. Then slowly, slowly they worked toward pushing it out, and that happened finally, I'd say maybe in the middle eighties and toward the latter part of the eighties there was no union. So, right now the employees are at the mercy of the company. And I know the company has a real bad safety track record. Some of the guys that I talked to unofficially , I mean even come in there. I worked at Molycorp in the mid seventies for three years, and I remember that they had a really bad safety record. And I had to hold this meeting pointing out unsafe conditions to be corrected, but if you did you would be reprimanded, so it wasn't easy doing it.

(b) (6) You worked there for three years?

(b) (6) Yes

(b) (6) And what did you do there?

(b) (6) I did anything from shoveling rocks to driving those big trucks.

(b) (6) and it was good pay and everything? Good hours and stuff?

(b) (6) Yeah, . I didn't like them because we used to have three different shifts. And just when you're going to get used to one shift they change you and your body goes through this change and rejection and it's very tough, it's very tough. Your body's always tired and as far as the work, sometimes it's hard, sometimes it's easy. It all depends where you are, but certainly I don't see anyone getting rich working in the mine. I mean not to where you see people really advancing.

(b) (6) When you were working there did you think that maybe that would be your life career. Did you ever think that? That you would stay there and you would work your way up in the company or anything like that?

(b) (6) I thought that was the way it was going to happen because I trained for being an electronic technician and I wanted to get into that field of work with them, but I knew it wasn't going to happen. I mean, to climb up to that department you have to go to seniority and there was a lot of guys above me, so after a while I realized it wasn't going to happen so it's kind of discouraging.

(b) (6) Do you think that that has happened for other people in the community- that they've been

able to move up or?

(b) (6) Yeah. I'm sure, but one more point when I worked at the mine during the mid seventies, everybody wanted to work for Molycorp, and we had students coming out of high school just going to the mine, yet not too many of them learned a trade that they could use when they were laid off .

(b) (6) After they were laid off, they didn't have another place they could go where they could use the same skills?

(b) (6) The only place that they could go is to another mine. Yet if they went to another mine even if they had certain skills, they had to start at the bottom as laborers and work themselves up and that's what a lot of guys did when there was a major layoff here. About ten years ago when the mine shut down, a lot of the guys went to work for other mines. A few of them started their own businesses, and they're still working hard. They don't want to go back. And uh, there was a lot of them that simply were totally lost, I mean they - either they didn't learn a good trade that they could use here in the outside world, or for some reason they ended up not learning something that could help them. Maybe they thought the mine was gonna go on forever. I don't know. There's different reasons...

(b) (6) I'm gonna back up and ask you what you did before you worked in the mine?

(b) (6) Well, shortly before that I just got out of school- high school . I went to school three years. Got my certified technician , came out, starting looking for work. Actually, I used to run a radio and TV shop here in town. I used to fix TVS and I used to work on my furniture on the side. I had my little work area in the back , and then my little show room. Basically, I was doing what I'm doing now, except now I'm just doing furniture.

(b) (6) Who taught you how to make furniture?

(b) (6) Well, Most of it is self taught. For example, these chairs, I designed them myself, I made them myself. Most of the furniture here is designed or made by me. It came to me in my from my heritage. My father was a woodworker, my grandfather and his father before that, so like myself, I'm fourth generation here in Northern New Mexico doing wood work although I've carried it beyond anybody else. But I just come from a long line of furniture woodworkers- artists so mos of the time people ask me who designs things- it comes naturally for me. It's just a natural process, but I did learn a lot of the basic stuff from my dad, and in school I took woodshop, and then I worked for other professional carpenters in my younger years, so I guess, a little bit of credit goes to different people, but mostly just to my family and heritage.

(b) (6) Are there other people in the community that have that as a tradition in their family?

(b) (6) Yes, there are the other (b) (6) just down the road. They're woodworkers. And there's some

of the [redacted] There's a lot of people that do this type of work, I mean not this type of work, they've got their own styles. In terms of the locals, yeah.

[redacted] So, it's something that's been in Questa for a long time.

[redacted] Yes.

[redacted] I wanted to ask you about the Artesanos. How did that group get started?

[redacted] Well, like anything else, it starts with a dream. And it starts with a cooperative effort, and taking chances and taking risks and doing things that are fun, and doing things that sometimes make you stumble and fall and make you get up again and keep on going. Yeah, that was a dream that myself and a few other community members started to talk about years ago and we wanted to help the community develop the arts and crafts abilities, and market them for all of us. That's where we started , so we started -like this time of the year we would do a lot of the arts and crafts during the fiestas. I remember we did several in San Luis for the fiestas and of course in Questa, and even down to Albuquerque, and that's the way it started, and we sort of grew a little bit, and eventually we got the building we have now. So, that's been kind of a growing process. Right now there's a show going on. I mean it's supposed to end today, but it's on the culture of the community. And not only the community it also touches on Costilla and Cerro, but it's about the history of the past and so I got my real display there on Turquoise Lake which is part of the history of Questa- I mean it doesn't go back generations, but it goes back thirty years. But I feel it's important that people know.

[redacted] How did you decide to put that together? What inspired you to do the Turquoise Lake piece?

[redacted] I've always done- whenever I get a chance. It's been sort of like my child. It's a funny way of putting it, but Turquoise Lake has been on e of those things[it's got a very unique history, and a lot of people don't even like to look at it or even think about it , but it's there and it's there for anybody to look at because it's real. It happened that way and it's the way it is now, and I think it's part of the history of the community ,and for me its important that people look at it, and they can do whatever they want with it but it's not gonna go away. It's not like a piece of furniture that you can get ride of and it's gone. This is something that actually happened and ...

[redacted] Why do you think people don't want to look at it?

[redacted] Different reasons maybe. A lot of people don't want to admit that it happened. A lot of people don't like to look at Molycorp as a villain. If you are a Molycorp supporter you don't want to see things like that. You don't want to see that side of the history of Molycorp.

[redacted] Were you there when they opened the Turquoise Lake?

[redacted] I wasn't there. I was in junior or senior high school. I didn't pay much attention to those

things. I don't remember the celebration. In fact, when we started getting these horrible dust storms up on Turquoise Lake, and this was ten years later-

(b) (6) About '78?

(b) (6) Yeah, and we started forming a group to investigate this issue and address this issue and one of the members said that he remembered something about Turquoise Lake and so he went to the Taos News to look for the article, and it so happened that particular article was missing, so he went to the Harper Foundation, and he found it there. That's where we got the article on Turquoise Lake. And so from there on we started just advertising about Turquoise Lake.

(b) (6) What was the Harper Foundation?

(b) (6) That was the public library, but they kept records of all the newspapers that came out of the Taos News.

(b) (6) you know, when I went to the county clerks office in Taos, there whole year of 1968 was missing- no I'm sorry, that was wrong. I went to the Taos News, because they just moved, and their whole years of 1968 is missing because I was looking for the articles about Molycorp. And they said no, check over at the County Clerk's office. So that's where I found it, was that they have their own set of newspapers there,.

(b) (6) I'm not at all surprised about the Taos News, because the Taos news has always been biased. It's always favored big industry. Obviously the mine gave them a lot of money. Advertising and stuff like that, so you can understand where somebody sits on that.

(b) (6) Do you think Taos benefits from the mine in other areas, the city of Taos in general?

(b) (6) The city of Taos? Well, they probably get a lot of taxes from the mine. And most of the high paying employees, the managers, live in Taos mostly. So, in that respect they do benefit. And then the rest of the employees , I mean, Taos benefits by the mine giving them a job whereby they don't have to put up with all the pollution and contamination.

(b) (6) Why don't they have to?

(b) (6) Put up with it?

(b) (6) Yeah

(b) (6) Because the pollution is here in Questa not in Taos.

(b) (6) [laughs] But, doesn't hasn't the watershed lower than the Red River been affected by the pollution?

(b) (6) Well yeah, and it's probably going to get more affected with the years as the contamination problem goes down stream and impacts the whole river and then down the Rio Grande. I mean it has to go downstream.

(b) (6) So, eventually it must have an effect somewhere besides Questa.

(b) (6) Definitely, but not directly as people - I guess what I'm trying to say, is that in Questa, the whole community is affected and not so much by the jobs but by the water contamination. I mean the drinking water at the mine is contaminated so they have to bottle their water now. And so it seems to me that contamination that's going up the canyon is traveling this way, and that someday we'll have to drink the water [] That's not happening in Taos or Angel Fire or Red River.

(b) (6) I heard somebody say that the town is kind of split in Questa - people who think that the water is contaminated and the people who don't think it's contaminated. And one reason given was- for example, the people on acequias are on different ditches, they're getting their water from different sources. Some people are getting their water from Cabresto, and some people are getting their water from the Red River. Do you think that's accurate that the town is kind of split in half that way of people who think the water's contaminated and people who don't think the water's contaminated?

(b) (6) Well, I think that I've been in al lot of discussions, hearings, and meetings where people from both sides, and there has been some people that the Red River is not dead, that they've been catching fish and eating it, that there's nothing wrong with the water. Now, people like that are either really loyal to Molycorp or they are totally ignorant because even the state has made a position that the river is dead . To what extent they haven't been willing to communicate, but there's professional people other than the state that have pointed out that the water is contaminated and you know if professional people are telling us and we disbelieve it , then it's either one, we're loyal, or we're ignorant. So, it's a matter of deciding by choice what you want to believe. And so that's's the way the community is. Some are not bothered by the contamination, and some are and some don't want to know.

(b) (6) When did you first become aware of contamination, or how did you start to think that the water was contaminated?

(b) (6) Well, I'm going to back up a tiny bit and say that my first involvement was dealing with the air pollution and that was like a major difference in Questa. We didn't have that before, and then we started seeing these white clouds come out of Turquoise lake and cover the mountains. You know, you couldn't even see the mountains back here. It was worse than a snow storm in the winter. I'm talking about maybe even twice a week or maybe even more, depending on the weather, strength of the wind. But after that we started investigating into different issues and finally we started discovering the line break contamination. There were serious problems not only below the tailings but also in the river with the line breaks and so that was the beginning.

and I used to get some of the tailings in my acequia or downstream. So, that in addition to some other problems that I pointed out. Another serious matter was that below the tailings there was some cattle. There's a guy that had some cattle in his field where the only water source was coming out of the tailings. And those cattle were dying. I mean those were black Angus that were turning white. Their hair was turning white, I got some photographs of those. We also discovering a lot of other carcasses in the same field and we did identify that the only water source was a discharge from the tailings, so that to me told me that we were dealing with a much more serious problem than simply what we were looking at the surface.

(b) (6) Do you know what it is in the tailings that could be poisonous?

(b) (6) I myself do not know that because I am not a chemist or whatever it takes but there have been a lot of reports and tests done that one could look up fairly easy.

(b) (6) Are there other incidents like that where animals that drank the water got sick or people that got sick?

(b) (6) Yes, below the tailings there was a lady that got sick because she was drinking the water from the well that got contaminated from the tailings , that drank the water. And the problem with that was not so much that the water was contaminated but the mine told them that there was nothing wrong with the water ,that the tailings was not affecting the drinking water, and so she kept on drinking it and getting sick. So, I think that those people might be a good source for you. I mean they have some really interesting stories to talk about. But, in that area, there's where a lot of the cattle got sick, first from drinking the water, and now from eating the grasses because from my understanding, a lo of the heavy metals or chemicals used in the tailings are absorbed by the plants and then if cattle eat them, it affects them. I think these are documented reports in other parts of the country, but it's happening here as well.

(b) (6) What about using it to grow food to irrigate with the water, do you think it would be the same problem?

(b) (6) It might be; it's something that would concern me

(b) (6) Do you grow food yourself?

(b) (6) Yes, but I've had to use the water from the river

(b) (6) From where? Where do you get it?

(b) (6) From the river, because I also have acequia water but it comes from the Red River.

(b) (6) So, you don't even use that to irrigate your garden?

(b) (6) Once in a long while if I have to, but not really. And the reason for that is that neither the

state nor anybody else, especially the state the state should be responsible for this for making doing whatever studies are necessary to tell us how this water is affecting different things like food or crops or even livestock or whatever, but to my knowledge, they have-not done it, so it's still a question mark.

(b) (6) So, have people from the community asked for reports like that?

(b) (6) I don't know about the rest of the community. I know I've asked.[laughs]

(b) (6) [laughs] What do they say?

(b) (6) One excuse is that it costs too much. That's always the most common excuse. It costs too much. If you ask the state, they're understaffed. I suspect that they just don't want to do it because if they do it and they find out there's something wrong, then they have to do something about it. They'd rather not commit themselves.

(b) (6) Didn't the EPA do studies here?

(b) (6) Not to my knowledge. The EPA' s worse than the state. If the state doesn't care about the people here, the federal government's worse. The only time that they come in is when there's money to be grabbed. It's documented. And that's the only thing they're good for, to come and take money, but not to do anything about the problem.

(b) (6) What kind of situation would that be like?

(b) (6) When the mine first started and they had a lot of line breaks into the river. It took the efforts of the Sierra Club, I think the Citizens for Clean Air and Water, and I believe it was the state that initiated a suit against Molycorp. So they fined them, fined them hundreds of thousands of dollars, but what happens, the federal government runs away with a chunk of the pie, and maybe the state got another piece of the pie, and maybe Sierra Club got another piece of the pie, but the community never got anything to remedy the problem. And that's what I mean - if there's some money to be made, they'll come in and get it and run with it, but nothing stays here to correct anything. And that's in the record.

(b) (6) So, you were in the Concerned Citizens of Questa? When did that start?

(b) (6) In '78 '79 . The group was organized and it was actually voted in, elected by the larger group of the community. And so we had a group called Concerned Citizens Committee , like a committee, and then later on as years went on we did away with the committee and we just called ourselves Concerned Citizens of Questa.

(b) (6) What kinds of actions did you take- what was your main goal in the Concerned Citizens of Questa?

(b) (6) Well the main goal was to correct a lot of the environmental problems that we got with the dust and actually it was through our efforts that Molycorp took whatever actions they had to take to [ ] to solve the problems with that, and then not only the dust storms but spills into the rivers and the acequias and private lands you know a lot of times at the beginning they had to go and clean it up, and those are some of the things that improvements that we forced the mine to do- to clean up.

(b) (6) Why do you say that Molycorp shut you up?

(b) (6) Well, if they hadn't put a lot of effort to bring the dust down we would still be screaming about it. It's the way it goes, you have to complain and complain and complain. I mean there at the beginning we used to be at every village meeting at every school board meeting, for years. I guess we were determined to do something whatever it took.

(b) (6) But that's not happening now?

(b) (6) [ ]When I think about it, it's overwhelming. I mean you can imagine working on something like this . I mean on something like this if you're not getting paid I mean you go broke really quickly.

(b) (6) You got burnt out?

(b) (6) Broke and burnt out and everything.

(b) (6) Do you think that's kind of happened to a lot of other people that were involved?

(b) (6) Yeah it's straining. It's hard for people to get involved. The issues are so emotional that you want to do and make things happen and put as much effort as you can. You want to make a difference. But it gets really discouraging in the community. A lot of people are just going about their normal lives- not giving this a second thought. It's hard, you know. [ ] I mean like right now I'm I do help whenever I can you know, mostly for Amigos Bravos, but I mean I don't do what I used to do. When we first started there wasn't other organizations or groups in this area. Not really there, you know. There were some we used to have communication with other groups that wanted to be more supportive [elsewhere].

(b) (6) How did Amigos Bravos get involved here up in Questa?

(b) (6) I guess it was, I'm going to say this - that might not be totally . I'm going [ ] Amigos Bravos started as a BLM support group, and eventually they sort of organized into a separate group and separated from BLM and of course it's more diverse and better structured than any other group that I know of. So, it's evolved in a very short time from the bottom to one of the top groups. That's what I like about it, but I - in breaking away from the BLM they got involved with the [ ] about , uh, Molycorp wanted to put another tailings in the mountains behind the Turquoise

Lake. They wanted to dam the area and fill up a tailings, so that's how they first got involved in Questa with protesting that project.

(b) (6) So why did you say that Amigos Bravos was like a BLM support group? What was it that they supported about the BLM - everything or ..?

(b) (6) Well, BLM did a fundraiser for that specific project for improving the Red River confluence area - but the BLM had a big fest with Michael Martin Murphy, and so Amigos Bravos organized them to help set that up. That's how my understanding is , that they set [ ] took place there. And Michael Murphy [ ] I still remember that night. That was the first time that we organized some of the artists and crafts people of the community, and we did the first fiesta and at that event we - [ ] that was a major change in history.

(b) (6) Do you think the fact that Amigos Bravos had this reputation for being supportive of the BLM that a lot of people got angry because of that -that a lot of people disliked Amigos Bravos because of that?

(b) (6) I think so, you know, I think that anything that attracts a lot of - like me -I'm sure a lot of people don't like me because of my involvement in Concerned Citizens - I mean I have like a long history- but that's ok. and uh, it's the same with Amigos Bravos. A lot of people, I'm sure, look back,, and say, you know, they like the BLM, but that's ok too. It's really hard to please everbody you're not going to make everybody happy anyway, and uh I guess they're not happy because of that. Not much one can do about it. You know that Amigos Bravos has another kind of a dark history, a dark memory. And it's [ ] on the Guadalupe Mountain. They, uh, made [ ] Amigos Bravos then. And I mean it's different now. And I'm not saying that was done as an organization as an organization recommendation- just one of the board members was pushing for it.

(b) (6) Oh. So, it wasn't a statement from the organization?

(b) (6) No, not from the organization.

(b) (6) Do you think Amigos Bravos can do anything in this area to um, kind of communicate better about what they're doing?

(b) (6) You mean the organization? Yeah, definitely. I think that memberships drives to encourage the community to participate with membership and also , Amigos Bravos can also provide a lot of education, information that I think can change a lot of the mentality that exists here. Like a lot of what you're doing, for example. You're going around talking to a lot of people. And it's making a big impact even if you're talking to mine , Molycorp supporters an djust by talking, I think, it opens doors. It helps people to evolve. So, things like this are good- not only that but I think some of the programs that Amigos Bravos has and some of the problems like the lawsuits against Molycorp - these are the things that I think a lot of people say, well it's time somebody

did something like that. You know, it's been going on too long. And Amigos Bravos has had the courage to really tackle some big issues and not back away from them, I mean, stand firm and take it on. And I think that the community- might view that as a role model- destined to cahnge the destiny of the community.

(b) (6) I was wondering what you think Questa would be like without a mine, and if you can describe what you think it would look like, what it would be like, and what the river, the Red River would be like if there never was a mine.

(b) (6) Well, I have a couple of possibilities. First of all, all the energy that we spend and we are spending on correcting some of the problems wouldn't be spent on this [Molycorp pollution]. Rather we could spend it on whatever else we do. I could spend it, for example, myself, I could spend it more on my craft, my business, and those things that I enjoy. So, if there ever came a [ ]way it is in Red River, we would either be living quite happy almost like in paradise, or this would be a major community- another tourist town. Those are my two choices. Does that make sense?

(b) (6) Yeah it does [laughs] It really does. I mean, I've heard people say that without the mine that you know it would be a ghost town and no one would be living here. I've heard other people say if there was no mining, then people would be doing the things they've always done for generations and generations before the mine came.

(b) (6) Yeah, that's what I mean. We'd have a nice quiet community and happy and everything. Sure, we'd be doing fine. Contamination, I'm sure, scares a lot of people away. Has to. I mean, you can't help but see the river the way it is. If you're a tourist you're not going to want to live here.

(b) (6) Do you remember the river when it wasn't contaminated?

(b) (6) Oh, it's been so long ago. It's really hard to imagine that now.

(b) (6) Did you ever drink the water from the river?

(b) (6) I don't ever remember doing that, myself. But uh, I can remember other people doing that and can remember doing that. But for myself, I don't remember doing it myself or actually seeing somebody. I remember an official working for the mine came up - he wanted to measure [ ] and actually leaking the material out. [laughs] But, I don't know [ ] and how loyal can they be?

(b) (6) I heard something interesting. I don't know what you think about it, but that at one time when the mine was starting to be open-pit, I think, that Molycorp hired psychologists to come to the community and talk to people and make people feel good about the mine or something like that. Have you ever heard about that?

(b) (6) That probably happened before I got involved, ok, when Moly first - during the expansion it was in the sixties, they did have public relations people coming through the community, talking to everybody you know, Those are - what I refer to as the wolves in sheep's clothing. They tried to come and promote the mine - yeah they did that.

(b) (6) Why do you think that um, they [Moly] expanded the mine here instead of going somewhere else- is it just that this is the best place to find the molybdenum or do you think that there's other reasons they think this is a great place to mine?

(b) (6) Well, obviously natural resources, the deposits are on different parts of the earth. If you find one, you want to mine it, right? If you're a miner. And so for them the only likely place was- I guess they must have looked every place. But, uh, another good location for them was that - this was a Hispanic community and most of the people were not going to know what they were doing anyway in terms of their operation - I mean , for us, what they do in the process with the chemicals that they get down here- I mean they don't know what that is- or nobody's gonna ask questions. That's what they [Moly] want. They don't want people to ask questions. That's what really started bothering them when *we* started asking questions - and we started getting educated and that became a threat to them. So, that was at least one good point for them. I think another good point is uh it's cheaper for them to operate because the flow of the tailings is downstream. For the most part it's [ ] so that was for their benefit, and uh , and then the way that they have run their operation. They had not had to be accountable for too much, I mean, all they had to do was pay the state, the federal government their permits. That's it. They always say we're in compliance with this permit or that permit even though our children were suffocating in the dust and they had, you know, people down below the tailings getting sick from drinking the water, cows dying with nobody to hold them accountable. As long as they were in compliance with the permits, that's all that matters to them. There's not very much one can do. So, they can get away with murder as long as their on the right side of the law.

(b) (6) Is there anything else you think we should talk about?

(Talk about the length of interview)

(b) (6) I actually just had one little thing to ask you about is if you'd seen historically some obvious or even subtle changes in how having the river, the changes in the river and change the community relationhsips or the sense of community? You know, has it changed at all or is it do you think it's evolution over time- it's gonna happen anyway or ...

(b) (6) I'm not real sure that I understood your question, (b) (6) Are you saying that - you're asking if the change in the river has changed the relationships within the community?

(b) (6) I mean, actually, I didn't mean it that way. I meant more uh , historically, how the river was used and how it's had to have changed since then is probably more what I mean.

(b) (6) In the way that people use the water?

(b) (6) The water, yeah.

(b) (6) Oh. definitely. Most definitely.

(b) (6) Can you talk about it a little bit? What you've seen.

(b) (6) Well, first of all, many of the people don't eat the fish they catch in the river, at least a lot of the local people don't. And I don't blame them because there's a lot of - there's a lot of concern about - I mean, there's so many question marks- about eating the fish from the river and there's so many question marks about using the water to irrigate your gardens, to feed your animals. Some people still do it, but there's a lot of us that, I mean, we're like - nobody wants to tell us if it's safe one way or the other or if it's not or whatever. And it's like you know we're just kind of standing back and - and we're not enjoying a lot of our traditional uses that people before used to enjoy without fear- without worry. I mean, those things are affecting us now at the larger part of the community- and the more we educate people, the bigger it gets. And I think it's important because I don't know if it's true or not, but - this is second hand information- but recently I've heard a couple of fisherman have caught fish and the bites have fallen off. I don't know if that's normal anywhere else or not, but that's just another thing to worry about. Another reason to get people to be careful, another reason to ask the state to get off their seats and do something about things, you know. Or, lately, that's some of the things I can see that have changed the traditional way of using the resources.

(b) (6) Ideally, how do you think that people should use the resources. Or how should people be able to regulate things and resources?

(b) (6) Well, ideally, like anywhere else, the upper Red River is much cleaner than here and I can see the difference just by looking at the river, I mean, it's it;s not scary, you know. I mean it's norma, it's natural. If you had to you could even drink it if you had to if you were thirsty and it's not like drinking the water here. I mean, that's quite a difference, I mean, standing in the same river, at two different points and having these feelings about it here and those feelings about it there - are totally day and night. And , I liked to mention the limitation on the use of the water. Water, if it's for drinking or domestic purposes, it should be saved for that. But if it doesn't look normal and nobody wants to answer any questions, well then, you just go around with a these question marks and - until something happens down the road, I mean, you - we live very [ ] lives here in Questa.Suspicious of everything and everybody. Because even the state, I mean, I don't trust the state. To tell you the truth I trust the federal government less. Because you know a lot of times if you don't find the answer, they're not going to give it to you. And that's been my experience in this whole process that "if you find the answer then we'll help you. If you don't find the answer - go look for it [laughs] and then come to us." Is that fact ?

(b) (6) Yeah, it's common.

(b) (6) Everybody seems to agree with *that* - so far.

(b) (6) And the problem is like he's saying the resources are tight already.[ ] without compensation, t just make it less likely that it's going to happen. And I don't mean you personally, but anybody.

(b) (6) Yeah, because they [Molycorp and the government] have the resources to fight any kind of issue. I mean, just what Amigos Bravos has spent in this last suit on Molycorp, I mean, we can't afford to do *anything*. We can't afford to take water samples and have them analyzed for everything that might be in the river, I mean, it's really ridiculous.

(b) (6) And things are getting more and more expensive.

(b) (6) Yeah, that's a problem. Things are getting more expensive and the water - I mean the quality water is getting less and less, I mean, it's getting depleted. I mean, and I think this is world wide. But , I mean, we have it right here where we can actually grab it and look at it and see you know.

(b) (6) That's a good point, where a lot of people never will have the opportunity to ever even notice because they're so isolated from a place like Questa. They might never ever understand what's going on.

(b) (6) Well, that's true, I mean, a lot of the isolation, I think, too is self-inflicted because many times we tend to shut our lenses off, turn our cameras off and pretend that everything is fine- that nothing's wrong. And so, those guys over there are just crying when everything is fine. I guess, uh, I look back at my life and I took a particular route, a different roof. I mean, I've chosen not to just sit back and do nothing about it and pretend nothing was happening. For whatever it's worth, that's what I've done.

(b) (6) Well, I have a lot of respect for that [laughs] especially after talking to other people [laughs] and knowing that it can't be easy.It's got to be hard.

(b) (6) Well, to some people to have an interview is too much, sticking their neck out too far. And I know, just what I understand from other people, they're not the people who are actively involved .

(b) (6) That's the way I understand the people here in the community. There's the mine supporters, there are those of us that do not support the environmental damage that they have done, and then there's the people in between. And those are the people that I think are kind of , for whatever reason, they're kind of threatened that , in that, if they take a position either one way or another that something horrible is going to happen to them or whatever. I , sometimes I just wonder what goes through those people's minds. And I can understand a little bit of it because, you know, there's been times when I have been scared, when I've been to a hostile meeting where there's maybe a couple hunderd mine supporters and there's only, what, thirty of you, it can get a little scary. [Laughs]. But, there again, I can , the one thing that I can say about this whole squabble is

that, as far as I'm concerned there has never been any hostility among the community. We have also - we have differences of opinions, but we have never taken the hatchet to one another. That is one of the things that I think makes me the most proud, and it helps me to keep on going to not be afraid and meet those that are my opposers in town and greet them and not get into a confrontation. That's been real positive. That's something that I really cherish as a valuable resource.

(b) (6) runs out of video tape.]

(b) (6) We made it this far though. Thank you so much!

Consultant: (b) (6)
Address (b) (6)
Date: July 22, 1998
Time: 10:30 AM
Interview Location: His house
Watershed Discussed: Red River

Interview Participants:
(b) (6) (b) (6)

Interview:
(b) (6) OK, we're here with (b) (6) and we're interested in your life experience and especially that has to has to do with the rivers and um your life here. Did you grow up in Questa.

(b) (6) Yes, all my life.

(b) (6) Your whole family's from Questa?

(b) (6) Yes, the house next door was my father's, and that's where I grew up. Later on I purchased this house from my father and added on to it, and that's how it got to where it is now. But, I've lived here all my life.

(b) (6) Was your father in the *Acequias* [association]?

(b) (6) Yes, he was treasurer of the association for as long back as I can remember. People would come in and pay their dues every spring before the irrigation season.

(b) (6) So, you were always aware that he was out there working in the ditch and?

(b) (6) Well, yes and I used to help him irrigate the fields back here when I was a young boy, since I can remember. So, this is where my experience has been.

(b) (6): What's the name of the *acequia* here?

(b) (6) The *acequia* on this side diverges from the Red River and it's called Citizen's Ditch Association.

(b) (6) Are there a lot of members?

(b) (6) Well, there's the south ditch on the other side of the river and north ditch and middle ditch which all have separate diversions from the Red River.

(b) (6) Are other *acequias* that have diversions from other rivers around here?

(b) (6) Yes, in fact I'm a member of Cabresto Lake Irrigation Association and also Llano Community Ditch Association which divert off the Cabresto Creek.

(b) (6) But, do you get water from there too?

(b) (6) On other lands that I own there on the *other* side of town.

(b) (6) What is - because I don't know a lot about *acequias*- how do they work, how do you make them and keep them working?

(b) (6) *Acequia* Associations are recognized political forms of government just like uh, county government, municipalities. They have the same standing as far as state law is concerned.For example, the *acequias* on the Red River have a priority date of 1818. It's actually, I guess, when they were first constructed . And the ones in Cabresto have a priority of 1815, so our water rights , if New Mexico Law is "first in use and first in right", we have the first uses of priority through the first use of water , and on the Red River. And also on the Cabresto Creek. And as far as the membership in the *acequias*- you have to own a piece of land that has water rights pertinent to it and uh, that's kind of a nutshell of *acequias*.

(b) (6) So, anybody could join?

(b) (6) You automatically have standing as a member if you own water rights within the *acequia.* You have rights to vote, and you can serve as a commissioner, and the requirement is that own the water right.

(b) (6) Does that water right go through the family? Is that how people get them?

(b) (6) Well, in many cases. Like this land here I inherited from my father- well the house I bought from him- but I have some other pieces that I inherited. Now those came through purchase from my father, well that was through purchase. On Cabresto and Llano I purchased. So, you can own a water right through purchase *or* inheritance.

(b) (6) Well, you said they [ditches] were probably first constructed around 1818.

(b) (6) Yes

(b) (6) So, in those days - is that when the laws about the *acequias* were formed?

(b) (6) Well, that was back in 1815 - we were under Spanish law. And many of the laws that still govern *acequias* today are based on Spanish and Mexican law. Pretty much, we're still tied to the original traditions of distribution, maintenance, and everything else that was based on practices

from back then.

(b) (6) I hear people talk about when they clean the ditches. What does that mean? What exactly do you do when you clean the ditch?

(b) (6) Well, usually, the commission sets a date aside in the early spring, and every water right owner is supposed to go out and help with the maintenance and like, we're on the north ditch and we start at the diversion and depending on how many people- usually there's twelve to twenty people that show up- and they start from a certain point and work down. And what we do is like clean any debris that's in the ditch and willows and stuff like that have to be chopped off and pretty much assure that there's a good head of water that can travel through the ditch to supply all the lands that are irrigated on the river.

(b) (6) So, you have to spend a lot of time working on it then during the year?

(b) (6) Uh, usually as far as the membership is concerned, they just set one day aside. And that's when this thorough cleaning happens. After that, usually there's like beaver dams and things like that that occur on the ditch. Many times, they ask individuals to go help if help is necessary. Or if it can be handled by one person usually the *mayordomo* sees to it, you know, whatever needs to be done.

(b) (6) I was interested- I asked somebody else about if women can be in *acequia* associations because it seems like it's all men.

(b) (6) Recently, I've seen women be commissioners in various associations, and I think it's more common nowadays then it was in the past , but as far as I know, and what I've seen of the statutes- women have always had equal rights in the ditch association.

(b) (6) Oh really? So, even in the past, there were probably women that were involved?

(b) (6) From what I've heard from some people, in the early days, men used to go out of town to work during the summers to a lot of surrounding states, and the women were the ones that maintained the *acequias* and raised the crops in the gardens and stuff like that, so there are in some periods in the past where women have handled the whole maintenance and irrigation while the men were gone.

(b) (6) Oh. What do you do with your *acequias*? Do you irrigate for a garden or?

(b) (6) Well, like here we irrigate mostly for pasture for grazing, and we've had gardens before here. And a few years ago we quit raising vegetables because of the quality of the water of the Red River. As you know the river runs pretty blue when it gets down to its lowest levels. I've always had concern about eating vegetables that are grown in water that's that badly contaminated

(b) (6) What do you mean it's contaminated?

(b) (6) Well, that's kind of a hard one. The state claims that ten miles of the Red River are biologically dead which are the ten miles where all the acequia diversions are- are within in that ten mile reach. They say that's all right for irrigation. But how can a river be bilogically dead and be good for irrigation? And then also, the color of the water in the Red River indicates to me that it's very highly polluted and probably toxic, even though you get this run around from the Environment Department and the EPA which says that the river isn't *that* bad. But I think you kind of have to decide yourself if you want to take the chance on their findings.

(b) (6) So, the EPA has done a lot of testing around here?

(b) (6) Yeah. I heard the expression one time that the "Red River had been uh studied to death."

(b) (6) [laughs] Oh no! I talked to somebody else here that said that they noticed when the river- yeah I guess it was the river- when the ditch especially started turning a different color- the water. She said it was almost like a film, a paint, on top of the river. Is that what it looks like to you sometimes?

(b) (6) Uh, yes. An example is uh , in the winters when it gets real cold, it freezes and the water goes up just like- it's similar to when it floods. But, being that the water is so low in the river, it freezes and it floods certain areas. And a few years ago I was down by the river, and there was uh leaves that had fallen from the trees alongside the river that had been submerged in this water. And the leaves and all the things like that were completely blue and they had a coating on them. At that time, I gathered some [leaves] in a plastic bag and I took them to Santa Fe to the State Engineer and I said "Well this is the type of water that we're receiving here" and at the time I felt the Engineer had the authority to prevent waste of water, and I thought that there was a possibility that through their authority, they could stop the water use because according to what I researched in the past, Molycorp got their permit to divert water from the Red River. The purpose was for creating energy to turn hydroelectric motors. And the reason the state allowed Molycorp to appropriate that much water was with a condition that it would not impair downstream users' water rights. Now, I see that as an impairment of our water rights because they're contaminating our water. So, going back to the leaves, I took them to Mr. Renolds who was the State Engineer at the time, and he had somebody from his office come up and check. And this guy came and did a survey, I guess, and reported back that the water was so clean that it looked blue.

(b) (6) [laughs]

(b) (6) And this is the kind of run around that we've gotten from state agencies in the past.

(b) (6) Why do you think the state would be so protective of the Molycorp, or why would they be denying that there could be contamination?

(b) (6) Well, I spoke to one expert. A few years ago they did an intensive study of the Red River, and they made it known that they were going to perform the study. And I tried the different agencies. The State Engineer was involved. The State Game and Fish, the Environment Department, and I called all of them and I asked them if I could participate. And the way I put it to them was "I'll do anything. I just want to be there when you do this study." And finally, the State Game and Fish said "Sure, you can come and just carry buckets because we're going to electroshock the river and you can carry the buckets that are going to take the fish". So, I participated in that, and when the study was being performed I talked to this person from the Environment Department. I mentioned to him, well I said "All of us here know that there's something wrong with the Red River. Why is it that in you studies it doesn't show that?" And he said, "The problem is, it's obvious that there's something wrong with the Red River, but if I say *something* or write and report that there *is* a problem with the Red River and it's contaminated, Molycorp can hire *ten* experts that are more qualified than I am to dispute what I say, so, I have to be very careful about what I say, because otherwise they're gonna tear me up in court.

(b) (6) Wow. So, basically they [Molycorp] have everybody intimidated that they're not gonna have a job if they go against them?

(b) (6) Oh, I don't know if they have *everybody* intimidated.

(b) (6) [laughs]

(b) (6) There aren't that many people that work there, but there are a lot of people that, like I say, they're afraid of the *power* of a big company like this, you know.

(b) (6) Somebody was telling me that , gosh I don't know what year. But I guess there was a reporter from the Taos News that came up to do a story on Molycorp and apparently the reporter was payed off by Molycorp to write things that weren't true about them. Do you think that that has happened very much?

(b) (6) I believe that a lot of the newspapers are biased *for* Molycorp. They don't report a lot of the things that are actually happening. They try to smooth it out and gloss it over to where it really doesn't really report what's going on. And I think that's one reason why is probably Molycorp buys advertisement from them, and there's some money involved there.

(b) (6) So, what year did the mine open- do you know?

(b) (6) From what I understand, originally in the twenties it was a small operation and then in 1965 was when they expanded it and opened up the open pit and that part of the expansion.

(b) (6) Do you think that's when things started to go bad with the water?

(b) (6) Yes, I think that's when it started. I was about fifteen years old in 1965, and I witnessed a

lot of spills that they had, and I witnessed the Red River running completely grey for days. And then eventually, we noticed that even if there wasn't any spills there was a blue cast to the river, and it started very very gradually. And still in the past, I've noticed that during the runoff the river water cleans itself, but then when the river goes down to its low levels it gradually starts to turn blue again.

(b) (6) And when did you first start to notice that?

(b) (6) I don't know specifically what time period it was because it started so gradually. It was like we'd notice and like friends would look out and say "there's something wrong with this river". And it was like, well, the way we explained it was they had so many spills during a certain period of time, and that was the only explanation. I think now with the impacts that are going into the river around Capulin Canyon, that we can see exactly *where* it's impacting the river. Before, it wasn't as blatant and it was hard to tell where it was coming from. And I think that opened the door for Molycorp to just deny the whole thing.

(b) (6) So, a lot of people were really worried about the condition of the water.

(b) (6) Well, in Questa we have a problem that .. There's two parts of town. The north side of town irrigates off of Cabresto Creek, and the south part irrigates off the Red River. The people in town, like on the north side are not concerned about the Red River because they don't look at it that much. In our situation, we can see the Red River through the window at our house. And we see what it is. Now I don't think the people on the other side of town realize how ugly and dirty it gets.

(b) (6) And maybe they don't think it's contaminated then?

(b) (6) Well, a lot of people have testified that there's nothing wrong with it, and that it's still a beautiful river. I don't know how they do that under oath.

(b) (6) These are people that are getting water from the Red River and irrigating.

(b) (6) No, mostly people that are *not* on the Red River give this type of testimony at Molycorp hearings like when the Environment Department and the EPA have hearings, they usually testify that there's nothing wrong with the Red River when mostly they're employees of Molycorp or contractors that do contracting for Molycorp. Those are the people that usually show up at the meetings and give this positive testimony about Molycorp.

(b) (6) Are, were you a part of the Concerned Citizens of Questa?

(b) (6) Yes, I think the name was the Concerned Citizens del Norte.

(b) (6) Oh, ok. How did people get that going? How did they get started on that?

(b) (6) Oh, I vaguely remember, quite a few years ago it was a lot of people that were concerned when the impact from the Red River began to be noticed and there *were* a lot of people concerned and there were a few meetings and I think it started as a community and local development. In other words, [ ]. And that's kind of the way it was, and many people were real strong on the issue. But when they realized that Molycorp was not very much in favor of that, as you probably know, in Questa, almost every family has one or two members that work at the mine. People want to protect their jobs, I think. So, I think that's one of the biggest problems we have that people don't really say what's happening. They feel that they could be jeopardizing jobs and their career.

(b) (6) What do you think Questa would be like without a mine?

(b) (6) I think that it'd probably be pretty much similar to what it is now because there's communities in Northern New Mexico that don't have mines in them. And they're peaceful communities. There's agriculture and people have managed to maintain their identities and everything. I don't feel that without the mine we would have become a ghost town like a lot of people claim that it would affect us.

(b) (6) Do you think it would be more traditional maybe?

(b) (6) I think so, and as a community maybe we'd be a lot closer. But due to the polarization that's happening in the community because of the mine, many families have been separated. And there are still like, that polarization that has occurred has separated families for where there's not good feelings between families. Because people have gone out and, I say, lied about the affects of Molycorp trying to protect jobs, and that makes *those* people feel bad about what they've done and that's part of the polarization that's occurred in the community.

(b) (6) I'm curious about something. When the mine was being proposed do you remember the polarization starting right away or like were people excited about it initially or

(b) (6) From what I've heard and read and things like that, it seemed as though the whole community was very excited about the mine because it was going to create many high paying jobs which originally it did. And there was a boom in the community from the jobs that were created and things like that, so initially, I think, people were very excited. It wasn't until people started seeing the affects of mining on the community, but this happened quite a few years later.

(b) (6) Can I ask another?

(b) (6) Oh yeah, go ahead.

(b) (6) In respect to the traditional uses - or traditional lifestyle- do you see any direct connections where things have had to change because of not feeling so good about the water or things like that ?

(b) (6) I think so, and I think what's also happened to the community there is uh well, not a lot, but some of the people in the community that were land based got jobs at the mine, and kind of put aside the agricultural part of the community because a job at the mine paid more and occupied people all day or whatever. There's not enough time for the agriculture, and people don't have to depend on it either as they did before the mine. Not to say that irrigation has stopped because I think that we see shortages as far as irrigation water is concerned in the other part of the community. We don't experience any shortages *on* the Red River, but the water isn't that good.

(b) (6) But you always have enough water.

(b) (6) Yes, on the Red Rivers, the *acequias* I don't think have ever experienced a shortage like in other communities and in other parts of town.

(b) (6) What about like in the areas the *bosques* or things growing around the river- has that changed?

(b) (6) Not that I've noticed. Here, what I'm trying to do is put in a different type of agriculture which is terracing. And this level here is completely flat. And when we irrigate it will flood over completely and then the second level is also the same and then the third level. So right now, we're putting grass in
in [ ] cause all of this is raw dirt that I imported. And we wanna condition the soil for a few years and maybe use a rotatiller and plant the whole thing. This pond that we have here [ ] seepage, so we don't divert directly from the river, so it seems as though the quality of the water is a lot better. I saw this terracing in Indonesia and Thailand when I was there. I liked it you know, so I started doing here. And you can see it's come a long way from what it was.

(b) (6) What did you do in Thailand?

(b) (6) We went to visit irrigation systems.

(b) (6) Oh, you did. People from the *acequias*?

(b) (6) Actually I was working for Northern New Mexico Legal Services. The attorney that I work with and my boss and a person from the State Engineer's Office. So there was three of us that went from New Mexico and we met with people there that were involved in agriculture and things like that. I found we have the same problems and there are the same issues.

(b) (6) Wow. Are the *acequia* associations- do they come out and say that the water is contaminated?

(b) (6) [pause] No, the *acequia* associations have a lot of members. Now, the commissioners are the ones that have a say about what's going on with the whole association, and usually they don't speak out and say there's something wrong. A few years ago I was a commissioner on the

Citizens Ditch Association and we wrote some letters and we were concerned about it and we questioned - in fact at that time Molycorp had a spill that affect the south ditch and we tried to do something about it but the next election came and we were voted out. So, it's not easy to say that, but that happens.

(b) (6) Do you think the way that the *acequias* work , the way the associations work is the best way, though?

(b) (6) Yes, I think so. They've maintained their identity for hundreds of years. That way I think they developed a *good* way of distributing water, and equally, you know. I think the traditional way is a good way cause that's how they've maintained themselves for all these years. I don't think that with modern methods and stuff like that we could improve too much on the systems that were already developed.

(b) (6) It reminds me of the sense of community when I used to go out on these cleaning day and you'd try to get your section of the ditch perfect until the ditch boss would say "yeah, you can move on to the next one" and they'd be all proud of themselves. But, you know, I think that really really increases the sense of community in general sense of the land and all of that.

(b) (6) Yes, and I enjoy going to clean the ditch. A lot of times I miss it because I've been real busy working in other communities, but it *is* a real sense of community and um the comradery that goes on to be working together and joint owners of the system. And it does bring people really closely together, and when you're cleaning the ditch everybody's equal, in a sense. It *is* a wonderful experience.

(b) (6) Are there other things in the community that are like that, that bring people together or that you feel that way about?

(b) (6) Not quite that way. I don't think there's *any*thing else that's similar. You know, I'm sure Artesanos [de Questa] has a certain day in the Fall and that brings people together. There's the Fiestas that the community has every year and that also brings people together, but cleaning the acequia, like I said, it's a matter of equality, it's a matter of working together, it's a matter of joint ownership which is different to all the other functions of the community.

(b) (6) Have you done, when you were growing up, farming or did you have horses and cattle or anything like that?

(b) (6) Uh, my father always had a milk cow, and he had a small herd about maybe it would get up to- well initially he had a permit for grazing on forest land. Eventually he sold that, but he always kept a her of about ten cows and usually one milk cow. So, we grew up tending those cattle and milking and things like that. We also- I had a small herd of sheep that grew to about maybe forty at one point. That's how I managed to buy my first bicycle, a brand new one. I believe it was Montgomery Ward that I ordered when we first sheared the sheep, you know, after a few years.

(b) (6) That seems like it's a pretty big tradition too from the past.

(b) (6) Yes, and it's pretty much gone in the community. There are very few farmers that have any sheep at all. Part of the reasons is that there's so many dogs around here.

(b) (6) Oh, that eat them?

(b) (6) Yes. I lost the whole herd of sheep cause- I had about thirty at the time- and the dogs came and chased them off the mountain. They were dead all over the place. So, I moved on from sheep

(b) (6) Wow. I've heard people talk about that cattle grazing- some people think it's damaging to the river and the *bosque,* and I was wondering what you think. Is that something that's good or bad? Or something else.[laughs]

(b) (6) I think that theory is totally incorrect. The cattle graze, but they move around a lot, and I think they clean up along the *bosques* and even on the mountain. For example, the Forest Service is chasing people out and environmentalists are trying to get rid of cattle grazing all together in the state. So, many people of these people don't realize that many of these lands that we grazed on that people still have grazing permits for are part of land grants that people in this community had access to for grazing and wood gathering and things like that. When the U.S. government came in they rejected most of our land grants and took away our common land, and I think many of these environmentalists don't understand that these were actually our lands. It's just kind of another move to take away from people what is rightfully theirs. As far as grazing, I don't think it hurts it because during dry times cattle can clean up old grows that usually creates fires and things like that. I think that many people claim that if you over graze you create erosion, and maybe that's true, but if you have ten thousand acres to graze on, well cattle move around and they're not gonna stick around in one spot and eat grass all the way down to the root. It think along the rivers, that's also something that the people have been displaced because we did- part of the land grant included the river and cattle just go in and drink water from em. There's been a lot of negative publicity about it. For example, our neighbor here, (b) (6) had a film documentary that he did on the Rio Grande. And it was a beautiful documentary with a lot of flowers and birds and green along the Rio Grande, but in the end he had a dead cow that was completely bloated with his legs sticking up in the air. Now that's a real bad picture to paint about cattle grazing cause it makes everyone's stomach turn and it's not a common occurrence. Cows *do* die just like any other wildlife, but it's not something you see along the river every time you walk through. Another thing is that I believe that the herds of wildlife are increasing on public lands, and maybe that's one of the causes of overgrazing. An example: I work in El Rito and Ojo Caliente. One night that I was driving back I saw herds of elk. Between Ojo Caliente and Tres Piedras I saw six different herds of elk along the road. It is being over grazed but maybe it's more wildlife.

(b) (6) [laughs] Sounds like it huh. Wow

(b) (6) Another difference between like industrial farming , for lack of a better word, and people who

have cattle grazing in huge tracts of land, you know, they've got hundreds and hundreds of cattle and the community farmer who has what he can handle and that's it.

(b) (6) It even seems like, from what you said, that if the BLM took away a lot of the land grant that would make it even worse. Where if there's gonna be cattle then there used to be a lot more land for them to go out in . And it sounds like now what they did was make it a lot worse.

(b) (6) Exactly. And they continue to do that. Now with the environmental movement, ranchers are being chased out of federal lands. Almost everywhere I see that with the people I work with. And the big problem I see is that farmers around these areas are having to cut down their herd because there isn't enough - they have private land where they graze during the winters but on this land they usually produce a lot of hay to feed their stock in the winter. Now with them having to move out of the Forest and BLM land there's more pressure on them to reduce their herds, and they can no longer sustain themselves the way they did historically.

(b) (6) Uh hm. Yeah, that would be frustrating. So, I can ask what kind of work you do now?

(b) (6) I work in water rights adjudications. The State Engineer about ten fifteen years ago completed their hydrographic surveys of all the *acequias* in northern New Mexico, and I started back in 1988 when all the *acequias* in Questa, Cerro, and [ ] formed one association. And, I started the research. We took the hydrographic survey maps out in the field and compared what the State Engineer's map said with the actual irrigated land. We found that the State made a lot of errors and a lot of people lost their water right. We also did do historical research to find out when the earliest use of water could have been in various communities, and pretty much I deal with all of the elements of a water right. And currently, I'm still working in the Red River adjudication . I also work in the Ojo Caliente and El Rito section adjudication. And the Truchas section of the Santa Cruz adjudication. I work specifically on water rights adjudication suits. And we prepare claims of errors for the State Engineer for research and if necessary we prepare people to go to court.

(b) (6) Sounds fascinating. I think you have to have a lot of education to do that [laughs].

(b) (6) Well actually, all I have is a high school education.

(b) (6) Really!

(b) (6) But it's been through experience, I think, initially starting the work and working closely with an attorney back in 1988 and we helped about 320 people give testimony in court and I think we were able to get back about a thousand acres of water rights that had been lost. And, then in 1990 I was offered a job with Northern New Mexico Legal Services. That's where I worked until the beginning of the year when I eventually quit with them and I'm working directly with the ditch associations now, consulting.

(b) (6) I was wondering about how a lot of people feel about the in-stream flow because has talked to me a little bit that people think that Amigos Bravos is only for in-stream flow and other organizations are for in-stream flow. Do you think that they're black and white, that that issue is black and white for the *acequias?*

(b) (6) I think so because the *acequias*, like are mentioned, are probably the first users of water in many communities. And uh, since, for example, the turn of the century canal, there are many new uses in all the stream systems. Now, if this state is "first in use, first in right" why is it that the acequias are the ones that are being targeted for in-stream flow? Now, an example is I own water rights on the Cabresto stream system. Cabresto Lake irrigation has a priority date of 1815. I also own water rights on the Llano irrigation association which priority date is 1916. The first, the senior association has the first right to twelve cubic feet per second. Anything over that belongs to Llano irrigation, the junior user. If you were to create and in-stream flow on the Cabresto Creek that would mean that maybe over a hundred people would lose their rights to irrigate on the Llano irrigation company because to create and in-stream flow would mean that many people would have to give up irrigating their land. Creating an in-stream flow allows you to take away other people's water rights. The way understand it, we have the senior right to use water. Now, in most places you have industry, you have municipalities and uh different users that began taking water later, and those are not being targeted because they're established and things like this, but there's a lot of documentation that says that the agriculture in northern New Mexico takes about 85% of all the water surface flows in the northern part of the state. Well we do take that water, but we return it undiminshed. There's industrial users and municipal users an all these other users that do *not* do the same thing, and I think that people that are trying to create in-stream flow do not understand the impact of what they're proposing because eventually if you do create something g like this where people begin to sell their water rights, and there are buyers that are going to put it in-stream, well then, we're gonna lose the charging of those aquifers up here in the northern part of Rio Grande aquifer. Every time we irrigate, the water goes on the ground and stays there and eventually flows back into the stream. Now, if we quit irrigating entirely, in this community, well that means that maybe the Rio Grande's gonna experience a drought a lot earlier in the season because if we stop irrigating that water is gonna rush down there a lot quicker. So, I think the impact of buying acequia water rights for in-stream flow are gonna work in the negative.

(b) (6) That's interesting. I haven't heard anybody say that. Because mostly they just get mad and don't want to talk about it [laugh]. But, I've been wondering why that people are against in-stream flow, and that makes a lot of sense.

(b) (6) Yeah, one example that I gave to one environmentalist was well what would happen if everybody north of Taos would quit irrigating? Or Taos and north. If everybody quit irrigating and everybody just left the water in the stream, all of this water would just rush down the river and after the runoff there wouldn't be very much left. If would just keep going down. Now, by irrigating, we are charging the aquifers up here. An example of that is when the farmers are irrigating around here you see how much water is flowing right there. When we're irrigating this field that amount almost doubles especially if we're irrigating in this immediate area. That amount

of water continues for about two weeks if we give this field a good irrigation. IF we don't irrigate that amount goes down and it gets real low.

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(b) (6) Do you think the mine needs a lot of water to do their job?

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(b) (6) Humanitarian. What do you think about Amigos Bravos? Do you think that they are more on the environmental sided of it or the humanitarian side of it?

(b) (6) [pauses] Uh, I think Amigos Bravos has gotten more uh aware of the issues that impact of traditional people. And I think that they have gotten to where they want to gain more understanding to be able to help a lot more. Now as far as the in stream flow thing- how they stand on differ much I deal with all of the elements of a water right. And currently, I'm still working in the Red River adjudication . I also work in the Ojo Caliente and El Rito section adjudication. And the Truchas section of the Santa Cruz adjudication. I work specifically on water rights adjudication suits. And we prepare claims of errors for the State Engineer for research and if necessary we prepare people to go to court.

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(b) (6) I think so because the aequias, like are mentioned, are probably the first users of water in many communities. And uh, since, for example, the turn of the century canal, there are many new uses in all the stream systems. Now, if this state is "first in use, first in right" why is it that the Acequias are the ones that are being targeted for in-stream flow? Now, an example is I own water rights on the Cabresto stream system. Cabresto Lake irrigation has a priority date of 1815. I also own water rights on the Llano irrigation association which priority date is 1916. The first, the senior association has the first right to twelve cubic feet per second. Anything over that belongs to

Llano irrigation, the junior user. If you were to create and in-stream flow on the Cabresto Creek that would mean that maybe over a hundred people would lose their rights to irrigate on the Llano irrigation company because to create and in-stream flow would mean that many people would have to give up irrigating their land. Creating an in-stream flow allows you to take away other people's water rights. The way understand it, we have the senior right to use water. Now, in most places you have industry, you have municipalities and uh different users that began taking water later, and those are not being targeted because they're established and things like this, but there's a lot of documentation that says that the agriculture in northern New Mexico takes about 85% of all the water surface flows in the northern part of the state. Well we do take that water, but we return it undiminished. There's industrial users and municipal users an all these other users that do *not* do the same thing, and I think that people that are trying to create in-stream flow do not understand the impact of what they're proposing because eventually if you do create something g like this where people begin to sell their water rights, and there are buyers that are going to put it in-stream, well then, we're gonna lose the charging of those aquifers up here in the northern part of Rio Grande aquifer. Every time we irrigate, the water goes on the ground and stays there and eventually flows back into the stream. Now, if we quit irrigating entirely, in this community, well that means that maybe the Rio Grande's gonna experience a drought a lot earlier in the season because if we stop irrigating that water is gonna rush down there a lot quicker. So, I think the impact of buying ACEQUIAs water rights for in-stream flow are gonna work in the negative.

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Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: [redacted]
Address: [redacted]
Questa [redacted]
Date: 7/1/98
Time: 2 PM
Interview Location: [redacted]
by [redacted] in Questa
Watershed Discussed: Red River

Interview Participants:
[redacted]

Interview:

[redacted] This is [redacted] want to start by asking you just about your personal history , If this is where you grew up, if this is your family's home?

[redacted] I grew up about five miles from here at Lama where the fire was three years ago. Right there. And, I'm the oldest of eight children plus three that my father and mother raised with us -older than me. I graduated in 1949 in Costilla. And that's where the [ ] in Costilla. And I went to Highlands a few semesters and a quarter in the summer. And I taught school a year and a half in Lama. And I got married in '52. And I started working for the postal service.

[redacted] Ah hah. You still do or no?

[redacted] I moved over here to Questa. We had four children -we raised four children. I retired in '88 with thirty-six years. And my granddaughter was born thirteen days after I retired so I raised her. And now I'm taking care of my mother who was eighty-eight in April. And my grand-children, this one that was here my granddaughter is fifteen, so I've been retired for ten years.

[redacted] I see.

[redacted] I'm just caring for them, and my house. Normally, I'd be at my house, but my sister's getting in from Indiana to visit me.

[redacted] That's great. So Lama is how far did you say?

[redacted] Five miles.

(b) (6) So, do you have recollections from growing up about the river from those days? Or was that a big part of your life?

(b) (6) Well, I came to school here . Incidentally, my house my home is right by the Cienega school across the post office. And there's where I came to school when I was little in the '40's. There was no running water , so the ditch , that main ditch was where we drank water from.

(b) (6) Right out of the ditch.

(b) (6) We'd make cups, paper cups and have our lunch there by the little stream. And we'd drink water there from the river. And of course the mine was already operating then.

(b) (6) /what year was that?

(b) (6) That was in the '30's and the '40's. It was underground though. They had the shaft.

(b) (6) They had to go underneath in the tunnels?

(b) (6) Yeah, and an old school bus would take the miners , all the miners, just people from here, I guess and some from Jaroso.

(b) (6) So, the mine has been employing people for a really long time.

(b) (6) A Long time.

(b) (6) So, did everybody drink out of the ditch like that?

(b) (6) Except the people that had wells. But the school didn't have wells, so the school children drank water from the ditch.

(b) (6) And it was clean or no? (Laugh)

(b) (6) Nobody ever complained. Because I guess the mine didn't cause any pollution then. But after they made it an open pit, it's just terrible. Some days, on windy days , then they built the school up there the second time.

(b) (6) Where did they build it?

(b) (6) By the highway department on 522 now going to Colorado about two miles from [ ]. And on windy days , you could hardly see the school.

(b) (6) How come?

(b) (6) Because the tailings land just on the other side of the school.

(b) (6) Oh, is that what they call Turquoise Lake?

(b) (6) Uh huh. Yeah. Where the tailings landed.

(b) (6) Uh huh. So, it blows up in the air?

(b) (6) Yeah. Right there by the school.

(b) (6) So, how many years has that been happening do you think?

(b) (6) Seven years, I guess. I guess it was in the sixties when they became an open pit. Sometime in the '60's.

(b) (6) So, you're saying that after it became an open pit mine is when it started getting polluted.

(b) (6) As far as I know.

(b) (6) How did you realize it was-- the water that was being polluted?

(b) (6) The water, the air on account of the dust.

(b) (6) How did the water change?

(b) (6) Well, see, they had this open pit and they had this huge mountain there where every time it rains that thing must have some kind of minerals and when it rains - they have wash outs there, and it gets into the river.

(b) (6) And so how does it affect the river? What happens to it?

(b) (6) Well, they have had, they have found dead fish there, when they're out fishing on the river.

(b) (6) Do people in your family fish a lot?

(b) (6) Not very much. They used to. One of my sons used to when he was little. But , not anymore.

(b) (6) But other people that went fishing they found dead fish?

(b) (6) Yeah. that's what they would report to the . I guess to the Game and Fish department because it would come out in the paper.

(b) (6) In the paper.

(Her grand kids talking)

(b) (6) What about, do you remember when you started to be aware that the river was being polluted?

(b) (6) Yes, because I irrigate my our garden. My husband was a gardener, and he'd make a big garden, and once in a while, we'd leave the stream open, and the water would come in, and then it would flood the garden, and we could see this awful thing, just bury the plants. And we never sent the stuff to be tested, but we did have some of the neighbors, some of the people from here look at it, and they'd say that it was from the open pit thing.

(b) (6) What did it look like?

(b) (6) Like a glossy yellow and sometimes gray paint or something.

(b) (6) So, then, your husband always had a garden that he would irrigate, from the ditch or...

(b) (6) From the ditch.

(b) (6) And do you still do that?

(b) (6) Yes

(b) (6) Do you think that the water quality has affected the things that you grow?

(b) (6) I don't know - it probably did whenever that we are careless and leave this open, so that . I have not made a garden there. So, I don't know.

(b) (6) What about other people -when you were noticing the stuff on the water, and talking to other people about it, were they worried about it or....

(b) (6) I have some friends that told me, that even that have shallow wells before the village provided water for everybody around that their bathrooms had like an oil-based rusty or , that they couldn't keep their commodes clean.

(b) (6) It was oily?

(b) (6) Yeah. but they didn't know what it was.

(b) (6) So, then. how did you get involved with the community- what's it called?

(b) (6) The Concerned Citizens. Because, I became involved with them because we had. we gave them a [ ] for their tailing pipes. They used about I don't know half or three quarters of a football field on our land.

(b) (6) Oh, across your land?

(b) (6) Yeah, and they were asking if we would renew the contract. So, I got involved because we had a lot of - the mine had a lot of grievances and also a lot of good comes out of it because ir helped a lot of people also. So, we can build that if they live to their agreement in employing the local people first that wanted the jobs and the surrounding communities, then we could help too in providing the land.

(b) (6) So, they came to you and asked if they can renew the contract. And the contract was for them to put a pipe ...

(b) (6) Well, we had already given them contracts for twenty years. And when we signed the contract with them , my husband and I , my husband had a verbal agreement with the managers here that the local people would have priority to the work. And they were supposed to get it in writing but they never did. They do a lot of things, they tell you,
" we're gonna do this or that" bot they never do it.

(b) (6) They never do it?

(b) (6) So, that's how I became involved. You know, I can't let you use my land, so they started offering me a lot of money to buy it.

(b) (6) Is it land that has been in your family for a long time?

(b) (6) In my husband's family it has been . It's been passed on from generation to generation and I have two sons. I can't sell, you know. But, it helps if people have a job. But you have to have control of your pollution. And also employment. So. I don't know. What I discovered was that they - I guess personnel didn't have very good human relations. And that's how come I was involved.

(b) (6) So, did they live up to hiring local people, or did they hire people from everywhere?

(b) (6) Well, they hired people from everywhere. Then finally, they started employing a

lot of the local ones that needed a job. the young ones that were starting their families under a lot of pressure from people like us that- and probably the concerned citizens.

(b) (6) So, they wouldn't have necessarily hired local people if you hadn't pressured them?

(b) (6) Well, some of them. They did hire some, but see, I don't know if probably most of the jobs are like , you getting the work and then you can recommend somebody else. And that's how the mine works. You bring in the friends and the relatives. But some of the younger ones that wanted to work from here never , some of them never got a job.

(b) (6) Why do think that is?

(b) (6) It's just very bad human relations, in the personal.

(b) (6) So then when the Concerned Citizens group came together, what were the main thing you were working on? What were your main concerns, I guess?

(b) (6) Employment for the local ones that needed a job.

(b) (6) That was the main thing?

(b) (6) And, uh, complaints from the people that their water was being polluted, the ones along the river, I guess.

(b) (6) So, a lot of people were affected by...

(b) (6) There were a lot of complaints, because their tailing pipes ?lost? A lot.

(b) (6) They break?

(b) (6) They break

(b) (6) And then what happens, it goes into the

(b) (6) If it's near the river, it goes into the river. And they have people around the clock surveying it.

(b) (6) The mine does?

(b) (6) The mine does. So, they do try to live to these environmental rules, I guess. But, when those pipes break there's nothing they can do.

(b) (6) It just goes wherever?

(b) (6) Yeah.

(b) (6) So do you think that they have increased the taking care of the environment, since the Concerned Citizens came together, do you think the mine has tried harder.

(b) (6) I think they have.

(b) (6) Do they have meetings in the community or something like that do the mine people ever come to meetings.

(b) (6) The mine people have meetings, but I have never gone to one. I don't know if the Concerned Citizens have had one. I haven't heard of any. I haven't. Of course, I'm pretty busy with my little...

(b) (6) Everybody, huh? Are there other ways that you think that the water has been affected besides what you told me. The way it looks, it has sort of a oily thing on it, and there's dead fish. Were there other things that you noticed or that other people said about the water?

(b) (6) Well, I can remember a few years ago when people were complaining of getting sick to their stomach, and they were blaming the water, but I never really found out for sure if...

(b) (6) That would be water that they were , um, getting out of their sinks or?

(b) (6) I guess probably the people that had shallow? Wells.

(b) (6) Do a lot of people still have those.

(b) (6) No, I don't think so, because the village has much involved in getting people to connect from there, the water and the sewer also.

(b) (6) What about ground water? Do you think that's been affected too by tailings or things that are coming from the mine.

(b) (6) I don't know.

(b) (6) Yeah, I don't know that much about how the drainage works, if it could it into the underneath water or if it would just go into the river. The flow from here goes down to Taos?

(b) (6) From here it goes to the Río Grande, to the Box Canyon.

(b) (6) To the Box Canyon. Has the flow of the river changed over the years. Has there been more or less water over the years?

(b) (6) It seems to me like it's been less. Cause I can remember when that river was full. Even up to now. And I always , this year we didn't have any places flooding. And ever year in spring

(b) (6) It used to flood?

(b) (6) Yeah, you have to be very careful with the floods, flooding of the river.

(b) (6) Do they have an *acequia* association here?

D

(b) (6) Have they also been involved in the Concerned Citizens? Do they get involved with water pollution issues?

(b) (6) I don't know. I have not attended their meetings. My husband used to attend their meetings and he died. They're all men there, so I don't know...

(b) (6) They're all men

(b) (6) if they bring that up or not.

(b) (6) That would be interesting to know.

(b) (6) They're very strict with their rules. But I don't know if they've tackled that or not.

Pause

(b) (6) I'm trying to think what else I was going to ask you.

(b) (6) What is your impression of how the water quality is now? I mean, how polluted or not polluted it is today.

(b) (6) You know, I haven't gone fishing for a few years. And I haven't even gone to the lake, so I

(b) (6) It's hard to say then

(b) (6) Uh huh.

(b) (6) And about the mine, how do think things are going with trying to keep less pollution? Do you think that they're doing a good job, or do think that they're just ignoring it or how do you think they are?

(b) (6) Oh, I haven't talked to anybody lately about it, so all I know is that they have twenty-four hour surveillance cause I know the people that work there. And my brother was working there, and that's what he did, surveillance for the tailing pipe. So that's how come I know they keep a

(b) (6) Surveillance?

(b) (6) Yeah, and if a pipe busts around two or three in the morning they're called to get to work.

(b) (6) Yeah, trying to clean it up.

(b) (6) Yeah, Right away.

(b) (6) What is it like, the pipe. What does it have in it? Like water or..

(b) (6) Yeah, it has water with the tailings of the molybdenum.

(b) (6) Like, the runoff from it? So, they use water in the mine to do the process?

(b) (6) Yes, they use a lot of water.

(b) (6) Where do they take the water from?

(b) (6) I suppose from the river.

(b) (6) From the river?

(b) (6) I guess so, unless they have their own wells.

(b) (6) I wonder if that could be why there's not as much water

(b) (6) I understand that they have a lot of water rights...they bought them for the rivers

(b) (6) They bought them. How do you go about buying water rights? How would somebody do that?

(b) (6) Right now, here, the village is charging eight hundred dollars to connect the

meter. if you don't have water rights that you can release or want to release. You pay eight hundred dollars to be able to connect your water from the village.

(b) (6) So then. they connect the meter, and then they can charge for however much ?

(b) (6) Yeah, you do it anyway. But if you're going to connect you either release she told me .8 or pay eight hundred dollars for the water right.

(b) (6) But then, a lot of people who have been living here already have water rights from their family or?

(b) (6) Yes, because all the properties, most of the properties had water rights.

(b) (6) Is that because- is it part of a land grant here?

(b) (6) Yeah.

(b) (6) What is the name of the land grant here?

(b) (6) I don't know. It even came out in the paper here about two weeks ago.

(b) (6) Oh really. I'll have to look in the paper, because I'm not very familiar with all the different ones, you know, what they're called or how they are, but I saw a map of the different ones.

(b) (6) It's the one that , what's his name, (b) (6) ? That representative that's working on it now.

Sister -in-law talking about how hot it is.

Talking about tape recorder.

(b) (6) (b) (6) from Amigos Bravos.-Do you know him?

(b) (6) I might, but I don't remember people unless I see them.

(b) (6) Until you see what they look like? Yeah, he's like my boss, I guess. But , and he went to school for anthropology, so I guess we have similar interests. Actually, I was gonna ask you if there have been like river organizations come here from other places like Amigos Bravos or different, like, environmental type organizations that have sort of gotten into what's happening here?

(b) (6) Yes, I remember one day, channel 4 was here once. I don't know who brought him here. I don't know who brought them (laugh)

(b) (6) Somebody did, huh?

(b) (6) Yeah, they came out on the news, in the papers.

(b) (6) And they talked about, what did they talk about?

(b) (6) About the river being polluted.

(b) (6) Wow

(b) (6) Of course, there's always the people that- a mine divides a community. There's the pros and cons. You can't even talk environmental issues, 'cause if somebody else is not for it, then they right away withdraw from the conversation because, I don't know, I guess they're afraid to lose their job, or the ones that are anticipating getting the job are afraid that they might not be called to work or , so they don't get involved and they don't even want to talk about it.

(b) (6) Do you think that most people are either on one side or the other, or do you think also that there's people they think that the mine's good for employment, but also they wish , they want it to clean up or they want it to not pollute?

(b) (6) Yeah, there's a lot of people that feel that way. And there's a lot of people that don't want to talk about it because they feel that the ones that are trying to keep the air clean and the water clean are attacking the ones that are working. And that's not it at all. I mean, you live and let live. In letting others live, is there's where the environment, protecting the environment comes in. Things like, happened in all these places where they have these copper mines. They wipe out entire communities.

(b) (6) How did they do that?

(b) (6) Just completely got polluted.

(b) (6) Got so polluted you couldn't even..

(b) (6) It got so out of hand. I was just watching one of those now in March I don't remember if it's in Kentucky or where they have , not copper mines, they're coal mines. And it's terrible.

(b) (6) Really? Also, all you talking about ones around here- copper mines?

(b) (6) No, I'm not talking about any of them around here. Other places where. I don't know if people just didn't move in time. That's what the people who were interviewed there said. They said they were just so busy working that before they knew it, people started moving away because they couldn't live there. And that's what was happening up here by the school at one time.

(b) (6) Uh huh. It was really bad?

(b) (6) The ones that were directly involved there had a monitor there that was being checked out almost every day.

(b) (6) Have people at the school complained about it or of being sick or something like that?

(b) (6) Around that time that I remember, a few years ago. Lately, I haven't. I've spent a lot of time at the school this year, and I don't know what they're doing, but I didn't see the dust like it used to come out before, this winter. I don't know what they're doing to prevent that.

(b) (6) I was wondering too, about how things changed, the dead fish or the water getting lower. Do you see a difference in the things that grow around the water. The trees or animals or things that were around the river. Have you ever noticed changes with that?

(b) (6) I don't know. It seems like it's not as green around the river as it used to be. It used to be like you could hardly get near the... the one that I'm mostly acquainted with is the
Red River, you know from here up. I drive up. Down to the hatchery I haven't gone. But up here, it seems like there's mostly dead trees.

(b) (6) You remember it being more green and more trees and stuff like that?

(b) (6) Unhm [yes].

(b) (6) Did people ever go around to get plants or herbs around by the river?

(b) (6) I don't know. I know I haven't. We used to. Yeah, but I haven't.

(b) (6) You're talking like a long time ago?

(b) (6) Well, thirty, forty years ago.

(b) (6) Wow. So, mostly people used to do that, but not so much anymore?

(b) (6) mm mh And we used to go on a lot of picnics, and we drank water from the river.(laughs)

(b) (6) Wow! When do you remember that?

(b) (6) Thirty or forty years ago I used to do that.

(b) (6) When did you have to stop drinking out of the river.

(b) (6) Uh... Thirty-five years ago.

(b) (6) Was it getting dirty because of the mine or because of other things?

(b) (6) Probably everything.

(b) (6) Like sewers or whatever, and things like that too?

(b) (6) I guess so, I don't know.

(b) (6) Have you been up to Red River?

(b) (6) No, I haven't even looked at it yet. (Laugh)

(b) (6) Oh, you have to go up there. As you approach the mine, there's this mountain, the whole mountain that , that's where they planted trees and they said they would come up. And lately, I 've been noticing a few small trees come up.

(b) (6) And whose planting these?

(b) (6) The mine

(b) (6) Interesting. Yeah, I'll have to go look. I haven't even seen the mine or anything. I've just been reading about it, you know. Looking at articles. So, I haven't seen it myself. That seems like a good idea. In fact, well, on July 11th, there having this thing by where there was Turquoise Lake at the tailings pond , and what they were doing. Amigos Bravos was planning on having- it's like thirty year reunion of Turquoise Lake, and then they're gonna say, "what happened to it? Where did Turquoise Lake go" cause I guess it used to be a real lake, right?

(b) (6) yeah, they planned to make like a lake with the tailings, and I guess probably what they thought was as the water - something probably like the ponds they have for

the sewers. I guess , that maybe what they planned, that the water would fall in there from the tailing pipe and it would clear up.

(b) (6) It didn't

(b) (6) So, do you remember when they opened up the lake? I guess it was 1968 when they opened it? Cause I looked at a newspaper article actually from the Taos News , and it was from 1968 that talked about people that went to the opening day. It even said their names, you know? This person, and I guess they went and they were going to fish but the fish died. Apparently there was no oxygen or I don't know what. So, that was interesting to read about.

(b) (6) Yeah, They used to have big town meetings and they'd have some people from the state, probably the county commissioners or some people representing the state to come down to the meetings. Well, there were these bad feelings on account of this pollution of the water, river. And they [ ] and get into a big - just a divided community.

(b) (6) I've heard some people say that if they - if the mine had not come, that people would just have moved away. Do you think that's true?

(b) (6) No. Because some people- when they closed the mine, they've closed it twice, and when they closed the mine they were in a real panic, like. And of course, they had a reason to be panicked because they had bought their trailers, double wide trailers, they had bought cars. Now they were without a job. They had to move on to some other place- mines where they could work. But, for most of the people, well they'd go on unemployment, and they could draw unemployment for a couple, for a year, at least. And then they'd get a job in Red River because Red River is tourists.

(b) (6) Oh, so they can find jobs there. So, in actuality, its more like, people have a hard time with staying here because of the mine in some ways? If they get laid off or fired then they have to go somewhere else?

(b) (6) Yeah, but. Yeah, then they have to go someplace else. Especially the people with families, you know. And the ones that don't want to move on, they don't have to because they own their own land and their own ... it's usually the ones hat had moved over here and established here and had bought or were renting and had bought a trailer that had to move out. But the local ones from here, they own their own land. If they want to stay here, they work in Taos or Red River, or now Costilla with the skiing. They employ a lot of people.

(b) (6) Are there a lot of people here too that are self-employed or?

(b) (6) Yeah, there's a lot of people here that are self-employed . There's a lot of talent here.

(b) (6) That's neat. Well, that's good. It's very interesting for me to learn about the community.

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: (b) (6)
Address: (b) (6)
Date: July 6, 1998
Time: 1 PM
Interview Location: Mr. (b) (6)
Watersheds Discussed: Red River, Río Grande, Río Chiquito

Interview Participants:
(b) (6) (b) (6)

Interview:

(b) (6) This is (b) (6) and I'm (b) (6) and actually, if you would talk about just growing up. You're from Taos?

(b) (6) Came in '38. Was seven years old. Started fishing immediately. Fished with the Indians up on the pueblos then, up on the reservation. That's where learned to do my fly fishing with a short leader and spear fishing which is a sneak and peak type thing so you can surprise the trout. The trout in those days throughout most all the streams we'd fish up the Hondo, all of the tributaries of the Río Grande. The higher up you went they were mostly are what we call "natives." Then with the advent of the Río Grande becoming more and more prolific with German Browns as the German Browns, they always went upstream I think the advent of the German Browns in all of our little streams they did away with our cutthroat population more than anything else. Plus one of the big things that the Río Grande did do, good or bad, the German Browns were a prolific fish and have given us fishing, but all of the fishing streams up in Pot Creek, Río Chiquito the little Río Grande, the Río Pueblo, and the pueblo that runs over Tres Ritos, now have all either a hundred percent German Brown or game and fish plant rainbows, whatever they are, they're usually stockers. Rainbows are stockers. German Browns are here, and the cutthroats other than where they put barriers in the streams, so the Browns couldn't go upstream, there are very few cutthroats left in Northern New Mexico. But. So the advent of the German Brown, and I think we're just in a , not a one year period, but we're in a cycle, as far as I can tell of not as much moisture as we've had in this world before. There are numerous streams that I've fished in the late '30's and early '40's that are not even running. I can't name all of them for you, but there's a couple of them up on the Costilla land and Cattle Company that I used to fish. There's a couple that run into the-- up into the Hondo called the Italianos and one other stream that really doesn't run enough to keep trout alive. There's one that came down from Palo Pachau [check spelling] that went along the highway there. Don't know that it had a name it would be the upper Río de Fernandez on the Taos peak. It has fish way up. It's right at the base of Palo Pachau Pass. There's one or two other little streams that fed the Río Fernando de Taos which is Taos Canyon. So, a lot

(b) (6) There wasn't any big fishing pressure on the Río Grande. A few of us started fishing it in the thirties when we found out that the fly fishing was really good. But you could go up on any of these local streams and catch thirty or forty. And it was cooler, the water was drinkable and, we don't drink any of the water now, even in the high mountain streams. I'm just a little afraid to drink it. I used to drink it all the time but mostly in the higher reaches. But I'd rather go thirsty and wait till I get back to my jeep to have a drink than take a chance. I forget what the disease is

(b) (6) Like, giardia? So, that's coming from cattle?

(b) (6) That's coming from cattle. It could come from elk and deer also, but as a kid I didn't seem to worry about it - the fact is I'd get thirsty occasionally and even drink the Río Grande water. But I knew where all of the springs were up and down the Río Grande where I'd stop over and have a little drink... and but the Río Grande through the thirties, forties, and sixties, up until that parasite little came down. The water got very low on the Río Grande. We've had several periods where it just was a trickle. And up around Sunshine there's a great big spring on the middle of the river up there that keeps the river flowing, but I can remember when sometimes - when it gets real warm, then its parasite seems to thrive. We lost a lot of our big trout. I know that I've caught many of the twenty eight and thirty inch range of both rainbows and German Browns in the Río Grande, and nowadays if you get a sixteen inches very often you're pretty lucky. I guess there are a few big ones down around Pilar, but Then another thing that happened within the last ten of twelve years is, evidently, one of the hatcheries or someplace up in Colorado, they got away. Now we have Pike in the Río Grande. And especially around Taos Junction Bridge in the lower reaches. And those Pike grow up to twenty or thirty pounds, and they're very cannibalistic, and wherever they are, they do a number your fish.

(b) (6) Is there a lot of sport fishing then for the larger fish?

(b) (6) I don't know. I'm not-- I've sort of been out of it on the Río Grande in the last few years. I still just like to go up into the upper trails, Cedar Springs, the arsenic set of trails up in the upper part, the Wild Rivers - there's a museum up there. Maybe you've seen the museum , and uh, we dedicated the Wild Rivers about ten or twelve years ago with a big party up there, (b) (6) was up there singing and it really was nice. A man by the name of (b) (6) did a beautiful oil painting that they made posters out of for the Wild Rivers. But the Arsenic springs--There're three of them and then there's the trail that goes where the Red River runs in . That was all very fine quality trout fishing and I don't know whether it's the pesticides that have gotten into the rivers from fertilizing the fields up in the San Luis Valley or what, but generally, among the fisherman that fish the river, it has gone down hill in the last twelve years, and I don't know why. I know it's not pressure because people don't go down and fish that river. It's too darn hard to get into. Most of the fisherman up until I guess about 1942 or there's there were four or five businessman here - they've all either expired or don't fish anymore, fish the Hondo in the afternoon and then the Río Grande right around five o'clock. For some reason, the Río Grande, if your a fly fisherman, you do not fish the Río Grande if the sun's on it. Your best time is from 6:30 to 8:30 in the evening. [points to fly fishing equipment.]

(b) (6) And You said also that the crawdads had disappeared?

(b) (6) I believe they have. I don't find the little ones. And I don't find them in the gullies when I fish [ ] Of course, most of it's the type of it's the type that catch and release but it's still nice to find one or two to have on the grill. But they reduced the limit like when I first started fishing the game limit was fifty. Then it was twenty but you could have two days possession. And then it gone down to twelve and now the limit's down to six fish period. Well, you walk down into the gorge. That's anywhere from 800 to 1000 feet on some of these old Indian trails or buffalo trails, and fish all evening to bring back six mediocre fish. I think that also has taken a lot of the bloom off the blossom, although now we're mostly practicing catch and release, so it doesn't matter.

(b) (6) What were the fishing trek trips like when you were younger that you went on?

(b) (6) Well, we used to catch so many fish, and uh, of course I enjoyed fishing the higher mountain streams to a greater extent than the Río Grande, and I know that your project is on the Río Grande- the influence the Río Grande has had on other streams, the biggest influence as I said was that [ ] the German Browns came up most of the little streams wherever they could. And in the last twenty years they've gone all the way up from the Río Grande all the way to the highest reaches of any of the little streams in New Mexico. But has given us a fishery, but its taken out quite a bit of the Rainbow.

(b) (6) What other kinds of changes do you think have taken place in the water?

(b) (6) There just isn't the flow which we talked about because our snow pack isn't as big. All the streams that I fish- all the little streams in Taos County and Río Arriba that I've fished- do not have the flow they had 25 years ago. And that makes a big difference on the reproduction portion. I mean if there's not a good flow and they're not a good amount of food washing down, then we're not gonna have healthy fish that reproduce. Now, I'm not a fisheries biologist, so that's just my thinking on it and what I've talked to other fishing guides who've been on the river a lot. They're several real fine fisherman in the area, but uh , Los Ríos has practiced good fishing practice. Most of the time what they do is they lease private rivers and private lakes because they charge $100 a day.

(b) (6) Wow.

(b) (6) I did it pretty much for free for years.

(b) (6) Really?

(b) (6) But I had people come to me. One of our stores downtown had the only fishing tackle department. So, during the '40's and '50's if they came in and bought fishing tackle and I was working, and I knew where to go I say "Well, where would you like me to show you". And then

I'd ask my father if I could take off and I think that we'd get more fishing in than we did work, but he was very lenient about that.

(b) (6) So, it was a family value?

(b) (6) Yeah, well, I still love to fish, but I'm doing more and more boat fishing, and I'm learning to bass fish now down at Elephant Butte. And I'm doing some other types of fishing. I'm going to Texas to fish and Oklahoma, and I'm trying to learn this bass fishing which is almost all - you return most all of the fish you catch bass fishing. Uh, the trout fishing- the little streams are so difficult- and they're always wanting "Oh, teach me how to trout fish" and the little streams are hard because if you spook a pool - spooking a pool means that you surprise the fish before they saw your fly- and you see them dart that pool's dead for a couple hours.

(b) (6) Wow.

(b) (6) And in most instances there's fish at the bottom of the pool that go and warn the fish at the head of the pool "don't bit because there's someone on this river fishing."

(b) (6) So, you really have to know how-

(b) (6) So, you really have to know how to read the river and then the presentation of fly, but reading the river and the presentation of the fly I don't think is as near as important as creeping up on the pool. Even the shadow of the fly rod will spook a pool. But your shadow for sure will, so you always wanna make sure that you got the sun not to your back where you're passing the shadow on the stream, and that you creep up and sometimes you only use maybe two- three feet of line and a little leader, and just put that fly right in the pool real quietly to snake out the ones in the upper part of the pool. It's not the glamourous long casting that you saw in "The River Runs Through It". I mean, it's not that way on a small stream. You do have some open casts, but that's one reason then we enjoy fishing the Río Grande. Cause there you do make long casts and that's more the fly fishing you get in Wyoming and Montana with the open, big rivers. I was just up there at Yellowstone just three or four weeks ago and the amount of water that they generate up there and the size of their rivers makes us look pretty pitiful down here in New Mexico. But, that's just the way it is.

(b) (6) Do you think that there have been developmental changes in the area that have affected the water quality or the quantity of the water?

(b) (6) Well, it's hard to tell. They say, now, I just can't help but think that a few of the breaks - and I guess it's been proven- that a few of the breaks at the Moly [Molycorp] - now, I've known all the managers up there, and I'm not gonna get down on the Moly mine. I know that your organization or the organization that is sponsoring you has some suits against the Moly on the Clean Water Act. I surmise that some of those breaks did something to the aquatic life that affected trout. The fact is, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if the stuff that came off of that killed

those crayfish. And the helgermites were the first to-- there are not any more helgermites.

(b) (6) What are helgermites?

(b) (6) Helgermites you found under rocks. They are so long [holds fingers about three inches apart]. They're black and have a lot of legs, and they clung - they were attached to the rocks under water. And often you would take a screen , and you'd turn up the rock and then the helgermite would run into the little screen that you hold below the rock and the current would run under. And they were exceptionally good fishing [bait]. They were a fishing bait. They have artificial helgermites flies that work somewhat as well. They're almost as likely to have mugglers, another fly that looks like a minnow that we fish with. I haven't seen any helgermites in the river, and I haven't seen any crawdads for maybe ten years. I just may not have been down at the right time, but we used to run our hands underneath the rocks to get the crawdads. Well, they don't pinch and break your skin, but they still give you a start. I mean you're putting your hand underneath there and trying to grab one, and one grabs you.

[telephone call interrupts]

(b) (6) Some think, but I don't know really why, but some say that the stuff seeping into the upper reaches of the Río Grande above Sunshine up in the San Luis cause a lot of that land is being irrigated now, and they're using fertilizers. And then if they have a heavy runoff some of that fertilizer runs into the Río Grande I'm sure. It's on the watershed. Now, whether that has an affect on the aquatic conditions of the river, I have no idea. I just know that fishing isn't as good as it used to be. Maybe I'm not a good a fisherman as I used to be.

(b) (6) [laughs] You think you lost your touch?

(b) (6) I may have lost my touch over some sixty years. [laughs]

(b) (6) Well, what was it that, I don't know, that's for you the greatest thing about being on the river fishing? What is it that drives you to that?

(b) (6) I think the Río Grande fishing- for one thing- when you drove your car off and took some of these little roads when you parked your car at the top of the canyon, you knew you were the only care there. So, you knew when you walked down you were going to have the river to yourself. I think the isolation, the beauty of the river - the Río Grande just fascinates me. It fascinates most people that fall in love with it. And knowing every nook and corner of it, in fact, I fished one section of the river, and I think I had some of those fish by their first names down there. Cause I knew where they were gonna be. It's challenging. If those rocks get wet in an afternoon sprinkle those lava rocks down there are just slick as a dickens. My chin and my legs still have scars from falling in the Río Grande over the years. In recent years there have been more and more poisonous bushes whatever you call them. You know, that make a rash. It will come to me. And of course there are a few snakes. I've not run into them - in all of my fishing down there I've only

run into four rattlers. So, that's not a bigee. Poison ivy, there's a lot of poison ivy down in the gorge. And so, whenever I take someone down there I warn them that we don't fish in shorts, we don't fish with short sleeve shirts, mainly because of mosquitoes or other animals. We just don't fish in short sleeve shirts. You spray yourself with Backwoods Off or something in the afternoons just so you're not bothered with them. But, poison ivy, if you get into it, it's an oil, so I say well if you think you brushed up against it then get down in the sand bank and scrub the portion of your body, your hands, your arms, and if you get some of that oil off of it immediately then you won't get as severe a case. I, it's just, oh the beauty of the different- as the sun sets you can see the levels of the sun on the different rock formations. And let the water - depending on any of the rains up above- the water will change occasionally. I know one night- there are a few places you can wade across. I like to fish the other side if I go down this side. I like to fish the other side because the sun's to my back and that portion of the river is in the shadow a half an hour earlier, so I get a little extra fishing. So, one night I was fishing the other side and evidently a big- I knew it was getting rainy and cloudy- just like we're getting our afternoon storms now. Uh, a big head of water came down and I was stuck on the other side.

(b) (6) Woah. How long were you there?

(b) (6) Well, it took me - my friend was on the other side, but he didn't know the river as well. He had to get in the vehicle, go across John Dunn's bridge and start working up towards , oh, Pot Mountain- there's a road that runs alongside the Río Grande on the west side going up. And I imagine I said, "I'll be on one of the roads up there. I don't know if you'll find me or not," but at ten o'clock I built a fire and he saw the fire, and came and picked me up. I wasn't particularly worried. I knew that I could walk out of there. I'm not more than five miles away from what we called the old 111 which is the old road across from John Dunn's bridge across a few acres. It was a little disconcerting that I was stuck on the other side, and I wasn't real sure - oh I had to walk downstream about a half a mile to get to another trail, but fortunately I knew all the trails. But, it was getting dark on me too. Coming up out of those trails in the dark I used to do it- but I wouldn't - we used to [ ] but I wouldn't anymore want to come out of there in the dark. That just is , I think, youth against age. But it's serenity, the beauty, the challenge, and knowing that you found a little piece of New Mexico- that you're not going to run into a lot of people.

(b) (6) Is that how it is up in the smaller streams?

(b) (6) To a great extent, yeah. If you get up high enough. But you almost always run into somebody on a small stream, particularly if it's on a weekend. If you go up on Tuesday or Wednesday, you very seldom see anybody up on [ ] streams. Of course they say there's more people fishing than ever, but I don't see as many people fishing on the streams as I used to. I don't know, maybe - the fishing isn't as good for one thing- and maybe they just don't want to fight it or work that hard at it.

(b) (6) It's that hard.

(b) (6) It is hard to catch trout. They just don't jump in your bag.

(b) (6) [laughs] You were talking about Cedar Springs. Is that Red River or-

(b) (6) That's about a mile and a half below where the Red River comes in on the other side. Now, yes, there is a Cedar Springs Road on this side also. But that's private land now. And it's blocked off, but that used to be a favorite trail. Then one of the other favorite trails is at the bottom of - you know there's one major hill going to Questa that you go up- the bottom of that hill there's a road that goes in, and there's a trail there. And that's just about oh a half a mile below where the Red River runs in.

(b) (6) Did you ever used to fish in the Red River?

(b) (6) Often. We would walk down- it'd still be dark- walk down a trail where the Red River comes in and we'd fish up the Red River. It's pretty brushy. We'd fish up there about an hour and come back down and fish the Río Grande. Of almost all the little tributaries that come in the river, the best fishing is at like from 5:00 in the morning till 6:30. Once the sun hits either the lower Red River or the lower Hondo where it runs in, there's not much fishing. But, in the early days a lot of big fish would come out of the Río Grande and go up the Red River, and they'd go up as far as the fish hatchery. But, a lot of people say "well, I 'm gonna fish from the hatchery down to the river". That's a five mile walk- rugged- and you don't do it in a day. I've people say "Would you meet me down- I want to start at the Red River- let me off here, and I want to meet you down- you walk down and meet me where the river comes in". I did it only once, and the guy didn't get down there till about 9:30 or 10:00 in the evening. It was a much longer hike than he thought it would be.

(b) (6) Do people take horses on those trails?

(b) (6) No.

(b) (6) You can't it's too rugged?

(b) (6) It's too rugged. Too rugged. I think there was one place, one of the arsenic trails was developed to where you could take a horse down it. They took -down at the bottom of arsenic, little arsenic there are

[tape ends. Subject changes to Molycorp]

(b) (6) Of course, you could tell every time there was a run, but even before Moly came up, there's certain structures of mountain formations up there that whenever they had a down pour- it's from the town of Red River to Questa somewhere in there- the river would get milky, funny looking. And I think it may get more milky now with those great big fills up there. You can see them from all over there. When they had the pit mine, and then they just filled up canyons and made

mountains actually up there. But, even before the Moly mine- see there was a small Moly mine- it started I think around 1929 or 1930 before it got into the big operation it is now in the '50's. But, the Red River during the rainy season does have a milky color to it almost constantly that time of the year.

(b) (6) So, that started around the '50's that you noticed-

(b) (6) Well, yeah, but even before the Moly got real big up there. I think it's just a formation of the gravel and land up there. If they had a heavy rain up there, I think it would be milky. And I don't know, I think it's been exaggerated. But I don't know if it's gotten worse. Being attached to - I watched and work very closely with the Red River fish hatchery for a while, and once or twice we weren't alerted -although our rearing ponds and our ponds inside are all fed by springs, some of the bigger ponds outside were fed by the Red River -and if they had a break in the pipes and they didn't let us know in time, some of our ponds where we grow the older fish which were 4 to 7 or 8 inches when we plant them got contaminated with Red River tailings. And think it did us any good. I never did hear if any were actually killed or not. But, they were gonna plant fish in those big tailings ponds that are below Questa. That didn't work.

(b) (6) Oh, I know. I remember I read an article about that, and it said that there wasn't oxygen for the fish. So, they just kind of -

(b) (6) I don't know, you may have some specific questions.

(b) (6) No, that's wonderful actually.

(b) (6) I think I either talked myself into a big hole or talked my way out of it. I don't know which.

(b) (6) Actually, it's been really helpful since I'm not familiar with a lot of the streams and where everything goes and what kinds of fish are there and what kinds of animals, and it's just neat to hear about what it's like.

(b) (6) Well, I taught fly fishing. In fact the first lessons were right back there in my back yard. I would get the timing right as far as the motion on the fly rod and then we'd go down to the streams and start working there. But the hardest thing for me to teach - people could pick up the fly-fishing part- the academics of casting a fly with a fly rod. That's not to hard. But reading the river and knowing where the fish lie where they get the optimum food, and on the Río Grande even though it's wide, maybe thirty or forty feet wide in places, you catch 90% of your fish within three feet of the shore. They're all right along the edge.

(b) (6) Oh, so that makes it nice.

(b) (6) It makes it easier. There's no reason to throw long casts out into the middle of the river cause you're not gonna catch many fish out there. But reading the river, and then presenting your fly

without too much splash. As good as I thought I was, when I got up with some guys up on the Snake River in Montana right around Jackson Hole, I got skunked. I didn't know what I was doing. Boy, I tell you. Of course they use a tiny, tiny fly just like they use over here on the San Juan below Navajo dam. There's some great fishing there. One of the best in the United States, but it so crowded, and your elbow to elbow. And I think whether I catch any or don't catch any, that's the wonderful thing about the Río Grande.

(b) (6) So now you think that fewer people are actually fishing?

(b) I think fewer people are actually fishing the harder trails. There may be more people fishing down around Pilar and that section. These higher trails up here - for one thing the trails aren't maintained and they're getting washed out- and it's all four wheel drive going to almost any of these roads along the river. And you need to know where you're going to get to, and I know one's washed out and you may need to go clear around the mountain to get down back through it. And, but it's all four wheel drive around there. You really should have someone take you to show you some of these streams and some of these trails that you walk in and out.

(b) (6) Yeah, I would love to actually.

(b) It's ,uh, I don't know how far back these trails date, but I would imagine that the deer or the buffalo or the Indians used them as far back as - cause there are some petroglyphs down in some of these places that I go that were done in the 1200's.

(b) (6) Wow. That's neat.

(b) So, it's an 800 year-old trail.

(b) (6) So, people taught you a lot of those trails, how to go. Yeah, it would be really great to be able to go on a trip with somebody or just to go to one of those fishing spots and see how they do it. [laughs]

(b) (6) Well, it's interesting. Fact is I have one fly reel that has orange line on it, because they had taken the photography equipment down and so you can see where my line is flying. Because a white line or a gray or a green line doesn't show up, so I have my camera.

(b) (6) Well, maybe when we get the real photographer she can go with you.

(b) Well, I think you've done a great job, and I'm not sure the interview was what you thought it would be.

(b) (6) Oh no, it was wonderful. [laugh] There's not hard, fast rules. It's just what people think is important and what *their* life is about. So, I thank you for your time.

(b) (6) [redacted] You're welcome-

Amigos Bravos Oral History Project
Consultant: (b) (6)
Address:
Phone:
Date:
Time: 12:30 PM
Location: Questa Senior Center

Interview Participants:
(b) (6)
SG: Sandhya Ganapathy

Background:
(b) (6) seemed nostalgic about times past. But many of his ideas would be considered "progressive" according to todays standards. He was well aware of the power and control that large multinational corps have on society and how money is weighted over peoples lives and well being. He was aslo critical of the notion that science and technology have necessarily progressed society. He sited the example of chemically treated fruits and vegetables and how he did not believe that an apple covered with pesticides and wax was not healthier for him then one he grew in his own garden, regardless of what the government said. I really enjoyed speaking with (b) (6) (b) (6) because of his wisdom and his ability to look at society critically.

(b) (6) Born and raised. Families that came from different places. But it was amongst families. But now you have people from New York, people from Connecticuit...
Because you can teach after only one year of college. And they were mostly local people. Their parents lived here and they graduated and they attended college for a year. And then they came back to teach. So it was all... You knew everybody in school. Because all the people lived in Questa. They didn't have people from different school or different towns. Each little school had their own towns. Costilla had their own. Cerro had their own. Questa had their own. Arroyo Hondo had their own. And then from the 60s lets say. I don't know exactly when they started merging a lot of these schools. So Costilla, now you only got up till the fourth grade or something like that. Then they have to come to Questa to come to school. They closed the school in Cerro. They've got to come to Questa. Red River high school has to come to Questa. So it's a lot different from when we were in in school. Because it was all local people. Not only your teachers. Well once in a while, we had a teacher, an outsider. But he felt right in. And they spoke Spanish, all the teachers. So you had any questions in class, they would talk to you. If you couldn't understand quite what they were saying, they would explain it to you in Spanish. So you could get it. What they were talking about.

SG: So when you went to school, did they mostly speak Spanish in school, or did they mostly speak English?

(b) When it was in class, they used the English language. But if you were in recess, in school . . . and they had to go in recess, you spoke mainly Spanish. So they didn't force you. In other words, each individual do their own thing. That if you say something in English . . . 'The ball

went down the road,' or something, well kids knew what you were talking about. But it was easier said in Spanish that it was in English. So automatically, you used Spanish.

SG: Well how did people make a living back then? What did they do for . . .

(b) (6) Mostly, the majority, the people who stayed in local, they didn't go out. They did farming. Or at the mine, probably fifteen, twenty employees. So they did mining, and the rest of the time was like farming. That's how they made their living. Like my father would go to Colorado and work six months. Save his money and come home. While the rest of the family was fixing the fences and irrigating, making a garden. We used to make a one acre, just a garden just to eat. Nowadays you even find people who want to make a garden.

SG: Yeah. They just go to Questa Supermarket.

(b) (6) Right.

SG: But did a lot of people do that? Or was it. . . .

(b) (6) I would say eighty percent of the people did that. And the one that didn't do that, they went out. And later on, after a year, they moved the family to where they were at. Like Denver. There's probably as many people there from Questa that there is in Questa. Because they stayed there. Then they had a family and they stayed in Denver.

SG: Why did they move? Do you know?

(b) (6) There was no, no resources of any kind to make a living. There was . . . in other words, you did not have enough hay to sell. You didn't have enough cows to make a living on that. See now, there's a lot of them that have . . . there's probably four or five farmer in Questa. That's all they do. Raise cattle and sell it in the fall. And then, there's a lot of them that sell hay. Not like years ago. Years ago, it was mostly for making gardens. You had, probably had a dozen sheep. You had maybe a hundren chickens. You had ten cows. And things like that. So it was just to make a living. Not to get rich.

SG: Just to get by.

(b) (6) Yeah. Just to eat and dress and things like that. Years ago.

SG: So I know rivers are pretty important. Because water's important for agriculture and things like that.

(b) (6) Well especially nowadays. Years ago, we swim in the rivers. We didn't have no swimming pools or anything like that. So we get together a group and go out along the river and we do swimming. And take care of cattle. We had, in our home, we had about thirteen cows. And me and my brothers had to go along the rivers taking the cattles so to feed 'em. Feed 'em all day so that they wouldn't eat out hay that we had at home. So during the summer, we pasture the

animals along the river, along the roads. There was hardly no cars either, see. So you wasn't afraid of a car running over them. And nowadays, it's with so many cars. So everything has changed. But that's the way we used to do. Me and my brothers, after school, we go out and feed our chickens and pigs and whatever we had. And then, during the summer, when there was weeds and all this along the river, grass and all that.

SG: Was that the Red River?

(b) (6) The Red River and then in the other direction is the Cabresto. So Cabresto is where we used to take our cattle and feed them along the rivers.

SG: And people don't do that as much anymore.

(b) (6) You don't see any taking their animals and feeding them along the road. And you see some alfalfa this high right now [raises his hand a few feet off the ground]. But they don't allow you to. Maybe the state, the laws have changed a lot. They're a lot . . . they're protecting the highways. Years ago, everybody had a cow along the river. Well they always had a boy or a girl or somebody from the family taking care of it. So they won't jump the fence and go into somebody else's property.

SG: So about the river, have the rivers changed any over the years?

(b) (6) No, I don't think . . . Well he mine has spoiled that river. I think the water's not clear. It's always like a cloudy colored pewter, kind of a brownish. Ore they digging in the mine. And I don't know if it goes through there with the dump or what. But the water, if you go from here to the mine and look at the river, the color of the water, and then go beyond mine towards Red River and see the color, how clear it is. So . . . and we didn't have that before.

SG: Is that the Red River or the Cabresto River or?

(b) (6) No. Red River is this way [points towards the Southeast]. Cabresto is this way [points toward the Northeast]. Cabresto, there's nothing, no mining, no nothing. So it's just the river and a little canyon where you go fishing and all that. And you go to Cabresto Lake. There's a lake above. And that was the dam that we had for irrigating here in Questa for your gardens. And that where get the water now too. Once the river gets low, they open the dam up above. Then the water goes through the river.

SG: Through the Cabresto River?

(b) (6) Comes through Cabresto Creek. And then they have irrigation ditches. They have a place where they separate it to the ditches. So everybody could have some to make their own gardens or feed the animals. It's very rare. Maybe there might be ten families in Questa that make gardens. Years ago it was everybody. So that's how come it's changed.

SG: Yeah. Do you know why they changed?

(b) (6) Well. First of all, people figure that going to school and going to work, you'd have to go to Albequerue or Santa Fe or Denver or Chicago, wherever, that you could make a living easier than being behing a cow all day long. So people have moved because money, or easier ways to make a living.

SG: What do you think about that? Do you think that's true.

(b) (6) Well, I think a lot of things are better then than they were, than they are now. But a lot of things are better now when they were then. Like now, you don't see anybody coming on horseback to the post office. They come in the cars. So years ago, you either walked, road a bicycle, or came in a horse to the post office. The post office used to be right here in the main street. And people used to walk a mine away, two miles away from the the post office. Pick some groceries from the market, the little stores you know, merchandise. Local people owned grocery stores and everything.

SG: Little businesses and things like that.

(b) (6) Yeah. See like now, probably at that time, when I was young I think there was only one filling station that I can remember. Today there's about five.

SG: Yeah. All on this road. So is that better or worse or?

(b) (6) Well. [Laughs]

SG: What do you think is better and what do you think is worse?

(b) (6) Well, I think years ago was better because you don't tear the sceneries in anyplace. Now, that they cut the mountains and they make buildings and all that, you see it. For example, if you see that house over there [points to a house], there it was just a pasture for animals and raising something for the animals. Well today you go up with a bulldozer. And the mine I think has destroyed the scenery in Questa.

SG: Yeah. Whenever I drive in, I see that big . . .

(b) (6) Cut in the mountain. Yeah.

SG: I'm sure it used to be covered with trees.

(b) (6) Oh yeah. Well looking at the tips of these mountains [points to mountains that have not been mined], that's the way that one looked. I got a picture of that area. It was a picture of 1946. And I took it to a painter to put it on a canvas, four feet by five. And I have it on a wall at home. What it looked in 1944, 1945, in fourty five years. In 1945.

SG: Wow. That would be incredible to see.

(b) (6) Yeah. It doesn't have that cut in the mountain. Have you ever been to Red River?

SG: No I haven't.

(b) (6) Okay, if you ever go to Red River, when we were kids, we'd take our cows to the range, to leave them there for the summer. We go once a month to check on them. To see that none of them died, or they haven't wandered someplace beyond the mountain. Red River, that was . . . when I was a kid, I only remember a small post office about as big as this building right here [points to the walls of a room approximately 15 by 20]. And a skating ring, and probably a couple of, maybe twenty cabins. You go now, it's something like Vail, Colorado. There's no place you could put a house in there.

SG: I heard this weekend they're having some biker feast.

(b) (6) Bikers come up for memorial. They've had as many as five thousand over the weekend.

SG: Wow. I was thinking, maybe I should go visit it today. But I don't know about five thousand bikers.

(b) (6) No. But right now, today, they're won't be that many if you went tomorrow. But tomorrow, they'll be many bikes from every direction coming in. So years ago, when we were kids and we saw so many people, we'd thought the world was ending up, or something. Because, I don't recall . . . in my young life, I saw maybe two motorcycles in Questa. The olden days in Questa. Today, they don't have trail bikes, they have some kind of bike. So, it's different.

SG: Wow. So a lot's changed then?

(b) (6) Oh yeah. Definately.

SG: Well one thing, about the pollution, how that's changed. Because you mentioned how the mine has like . . .

(b) (6) Well the government is behind it. And they wanted to cut this mountain here [points to a mountain accross from one of the waste rock piles] and start digging into that one and cutting it, like they did over there. And the government stopped them. The environment. No, you can't do that. If you wanted the ore from that mountain, which they probably have leases or whatever, grants or whatever, they have to go underground and get it out. They can't cut an open pit like they did there. They stopped 'em from that. People started complaining because you're going to destroy all the mountains, the beauty.

SG: Do you know when that happened? Or when they wanted to do that?

(b) (6) Well, the mine it was in about the sixties when they started making an open pit. And then I'd say in about the seventies, I don't know, some people, politics, or some organization, stopped or complained about it.

SG: When they wanted to expand it.

(b) (6) Well, continue it over there. And you'll see some roads in the mountains, where they were already going around, where they were going to make. But the government stopped 'em from that. So that they couldn't continue no more.

SG: Well do you know how the pollution has affected people?

(b) (6) Well, we don't notice the pollution too much here. You notice it like in Santa Fe, Albequerque, Denver, big cities. Because of the people there is there. There's not that many people here to say there's pollution. But years ago too, there were very few people that had canned goods from the store. Today, ninety-nine percent of the people have them. Some kind of can from the store.

SG: Yeah. In their cupboard.

(b) (6) Yeah. Years ago, everybody canned their own food. Jarred. With jars is how they did all their saving for the winter.

SG: Yeah. So now people use more cans and buy stuff more.

(b) (6) Yeah. Like you say, 'well, I hate to make a garden because I have to take care of the carrots. I have to weed 'em. I have to wet 'em. I mean, I have to water 'em. Then, I have to go dig 'em out in the fall. Then I have to make a celler to keep 'em over winter. It's easier for me to run to the store and get a can. See, everbody's looking to . . . for easy things. But it was more healthy for you to get it from the garden. No chemicals, no nothing to preserve it. You didn't do anything, it was all natural. And people doesn't understand it. Kids today, you explain them that . . .

SG: They eat candy bars.

(b) (6) Yeah. Candy bars

[Talks about the different kinds of candy bars when he was young]

[Varieties of cigarettes]

SG: Well, so you mentioned how it's not healthy and things like that.

(b) (6) Well anything, even an apple tree, that you might have here, is a natural tree. You have the blossoms and then the apple. You don't spray for anything. It's a natural apple. The way god is supposed to have that apple. Well, you go to big areas where they have orchids of apples, they spray 'em for bugs. They spray 'em later on in the fall when they gonna pick 'em up. I don't know if it's wax or what, but they're all so shiney. Apples don't grow that way. You go around here and you'll see apples this summer. Just look at 'em or grab one. People don't mind. And you'll see the difference. How solid those apples. And they're not shiny. You go to the store

and they look like they're [inaudible] [Laughs].

SG: Like plastic.

(b) (6) Yeah. Like if you cover them with plastic.

SG: I think that's what they do. They put wax on 'em.

(b) They put something on 'em. I don't know what it is. So, a lot of those things changed. And I think it was healthier the way we were living years ago. Although the people today would say it's healthier now.

SG: How so?

(b) (6) Well, if you went to argue with the state or somebody to get a company that's selling apples there. They go along with the company. They have more knowlege then you do. But deep inside, I don't believe that it's healthier. No.

SG: I don't believe it either.

[More about chemicals on fruits and vegetables]

SG: Well when the water was polluted and things like that from the mine, do you know if that affected people's health?

(b) (6) Well I've heard that they had different people in Questa, that their cattle was dieing drinking water from there. I don't know what came and got into the ground and stuff. And I've heard that one suit that they had. So something went wrong. I don't know exactly. I'm not a chemist so I don't know exactly what. I know a couple of people that I've heard.

SG: Do you know if a lot of people have had that problem?

(b) (6) Well, from over there, it's only the people that live here. But the people who live over there, up above, they get their water from Cabresto. See, there's no mine up there. There's no mining at all. So I think the water in Cabresto, or above Red River, above the mine, I think the water is better than it is down here along the river.

SG: What about... I heard there was something with dust clouds or something. Do you know?

(b) (6) See the tailings of the mine, they're piped in. In other words, they grind all these big rocks and all that. The fine, the waste . . . they get all the minerals out. The silver, the gold, they're not mining for that. They're mining for Molybdenum. But all the other fine stuff. The tailings, because with the water after they grind it and all that. The real fine stuff, its so fine, it's probably finer than ashes. That comes through pipes. The pipe it from all the way from the mine. There's a dam back here [points in the direction of the tailings dam]. The tailings that come from the

mine. When it's hot, say during the summer. And it gets windy. You'll see that dust fly from there. Goes along the mine and goes towards all the way it can go. And you can see it like a cloud.

SG: Does that still happen?

(b) (6) Mm, hmm. Still happens.

SG: Hmm. I don't know. I think that might not be good for you.

(b) (6) I don't think that thats good for anybody. I think that that's worse than pollution. Because pollution, it's up in the air up above. And it might be down in the bottom. Like in Denver, you park a car like that and leave it over night. Next morning, you go and see fine on the car, like a dust. So I imagine that's just as bad. But politics again. You have to fight city hall. You not gonna close the mine. The mine is worth billions of dollars. Me and you cry and die along the rivers screaming, or right along the highway. And people see you starving there because you can't eat anything. But they're not gonna close that mine.

SG: I guess because of maybe jobs. I don't know.

(b) (6) Well the only ore that you ge there, that ore is to harden steel. Or to make lead for the pencils. It has some of that. But I don't think they're gonna close the mine ever just because of dust.

SG: So do you know if people have complained. Like of health. Or do other people care about this.

(b) (6) Well I don't think that they have a case that they could prove that the lungs of a certain individual were caused by that dust. So I imagine that by the time they do decide to prove it, by that time maybe half of those people are dead. And then you better have some money if you're gonna fight city hall. But that dust is no good. I don't think so. And you'll see it. If it's windy today. Of course it's been wet for that past three or four days. So everythings settled down. But let it be hot for a couple of weeks. And let the wind come around. And then you can come to Questa and you can take a picture of it. Right accross from where I live. Close to the mountains, there goes that cloud... that dust.

SG: They said that they had to move the high school because of it.

(b) (6) Right.

SG: So did people in town get mad?

(b) (6) Well the state sends an ordinence that this thing is gonna be done, me and you can't do nothing unless the whole community screams. Then the politics again. Under the table, they pay certain people. "Well you fight for us. You go along with what we say."

SG: So the state was gonna, um, complain about Molycorp? Or they were...

(b) (6) Well the state probably could complain to Washington. And Washington would have send investigators and people to check. And then something might be done if they see something wrong. But as long as the people in the state don't complain, the government's not going to come here on their own. So it has to be the community, to go to the county... the county has to go to the state. The state goes to Washington. But as long as you don't go following the channels, nothing is going to be done. But I think . . . they way I look at it, you work harder, longer hours and it was harder to make a living then. But now-a-days, everybody got good jobs, everybody a new car or truck and all that. They're happy. Then you show pictures of your grandfather, in his dress, his coverall and boots and straw hat. Nobody wants to go back to those years.

SG: No. It's easier now maybe.

(b) (6) [Laughs] Like you. If you had to go back to India. And India has improved too, believe me. But if you talk to your great-grandfathers when they were living, and they told you stories. You'd say, "Oh . . . eh. I'm glad that I'm living in the United States." So the same thing with the people here. The only thing, a lot of countries figure that the people who live in the United States are rich, because they have a car. And in Korea, at the time when I was in Korea, to own a horse, you was rich. You had some way to pull your vegatables, pull the wagons or something. The other people had to do it all on their backs.

SG: A lot harder.

(b) (6) Would you want to do it on your back or would you want to do it with a horse [laughs].

SG: I don't know if I could do it by myself.

(b) (6) Well no. They had four or five people pulling this particular plow or machine to do something in their gardens or their crops that they had. Or they did it with a horse. When you went home in the evening, you probably didn't feel like eating. You were so tired. Same thing with the people here. Years ago, like I said, when we were little, since I would say the first grade, I would go with my bigger brother along the rivers with the cows, to pasture along the river, along the highways. And we'd take our lunch and we'd eat over their. We'd come in the evening. We'd take them to the coralles and give them water. And that was it. The next day the same thing. Today, who . . . you want to have a kid along the rivers with the cows. You wouldn't even dream of it.

SG: No. Probably not.

(b) (6) I don't say that it's wrong to do that. But it's easier for me to send him to sell the newspaper. That's the way I look at it. And I think that ninety percent of the people agree with me. But to fight the mine. I still say . . . . If you don't believe me, you go from that little bridge accross the river there. From there, all the way to where the mine is. And then stop any place

and look at the water, look at the color. And then once you pass the mine, still Red River, look at the water how clear and beautiful it is. I wouldn't drink out of the river today. Even if I was thirsty. If I was beyond the mine, I would get a cup or hat and drink out of it. But you would have to see that for yourself. The Rio Grande that goes along that way. Well that river goes all the way to Colorado. That's where it starts. And it comes to New Mexico, it goes all the way to El Paso, Texas.

SG: By Mexico.

(b) (6) Mexico and the United States. Of course, you got a lot of mountains from all over water going into that particular river. You go now too, if you go Cerro down by the river. You've got to be awful strong and healthy to gown there and back. Because it's just like a cliff. And then, but if you look at the water, how nice and clear. When you go up here, just below the, they call it the hunta, where the rivers come together. Where the this river and the Rio Grande come together. You see the water, the color, that water to this water.

SG: I actually visited, is it the Wild Rivers area? I didn't climb down, [laughter]but I looked from up top and it looked pretty beautiful.

(b) (6) Yeah. And if you go down there fishing. I used to when I was a younger boy. The water is just clear. You could drink water. It could be just a pure as you could get it. But you here when they come together, and you . . . . Well you look over here. You don't have to go down there. And you'll see the difference. And that water is going down to Albuquerque and Santa Fe and way down to Texas, part of that stuff that comes out of there.

SG: It comes from the mine. Wow. Well, you told me a lot about how things are changing.

(b) (6) Oh yeah. Well I don't think it's only Questa. When I went to Santa Fe, 1948, there was cars and there was people, probably 40,000 people in Santa Fe then. Santa Fe today probably has 200,000, close. Denver. When I went to Denver in 19 . . . what year was it, 1948. When I went to Denver it was probably a 150,000 people. There's over two million in Denver today.

SG: Wow. It's a lot bigger.

(b) (6) When you got to Denver, around the area, nothing but farms raising all kinds of vegatable. Beautiful. All that land be builing now, and factories, and some kind of industry.

SG: Wow. I wonder if those are polluting.

(b) (6) Well Denver's got a lot of pollution. Believe me. As soon as you hit Castle Rock, when you get up the hill you could see Denver, you could see a brown cloud, low, all over the whole city. But once you get into the city, you don't see it. But you could smell it. The changes, you would have to have lived to believe all this.

SG: Yeah. Well even me, I came from Florida, but I grew up in New Jersey. And there's a lot of

pollution there. And then when I come here, I think this is so clean.

(b) (6) It is. It is. And the reasons Albuquerque didn't come out too bad, is the pollution that they have is cars only. No industry. But if they let them build a factory to build tires, or make cars, like they do in Detroit, pollution would be so bad that it would be worse then over there. Because where Albuquerque is, the only mountains are the ones on the east side. The rest going west is just open country.

SG: Yeah. So it's like what do you want? Have more technology, but you might be sick because of it.

(b) (6) Well if you've ever been in the ocean. For example, if you've been in the Atlantic and also the Pacific. The waters up here in Florida looks like dirty, the water. You go to California, the water is different. It's beatiful. You say, "Oh, I love the beach in Florida." Well once you go to California, you probably won't want to go to the beach in Florida.

SG: No. I know the beach in New Jersey is pretty bad. [Laughter]

(b) (6) I was in, not to long ago, I was in Florida. I went to Coco Beach. And the people get in that water. What do you know, what kind of disease could be in the water, and you in your swimming suit with water all around you and you think that's healthy. I don't think that it is, but maybe it is. I don't know. I didn't go to the beach. I just went to see.

SG: Yeah. Safe distance.

(b) (6) Yeah. [Laughter]

SG: So do many people swim in this river [Red River] any more.

(b) (6) I haven't seen . . . well hippies. The people we call hippies. Once in a while you see somebody in the middle of the river with cut off jean or something. But not like years ago. We would have nude completely. And on top of rock we'd be sitting dowm or jumping in the water or something. Kids. You don't see that.

SG: So when did it start getting that cloudy milky color.

(b) (6) Well, in the sixties. I don't remember when the mine completly came big. Because it was the underground before, in the fifties. So I would say in the sixties, when they give them permission to cut the mountain. And that's when you really started noticing the changes in the color of the water. But you don't have take my word for it. Just look at that river and go up to Cabresto. And just looking at that water over here and going up to Cabresto. And you see the difference in that water. They say that it's not polluted, according to the state. Because the state doesn't stop them from mining. Nor the Federal governement. But you go to Cabresto and look at that water that's coming out from the other canyon and you see the difference. I don't know if (b) (6) notices it or not.

(b) (6) Yeah but the difference is, that one, it's coming down. It's got more malhorte, purifying factor]

(b) (6) The Cabresto?

(b) (6) Yeah.

(b) (6) Yeah. But there's nothing to pollute it either.

(b) (6) Yeah. Nothing at all.

(b) (6) That mine might say they are not polluting it, but you look at the water. The color from the mine, to where it comes together over here.

(b) (6) Well it's called the Red River. It's got to be red. [Laughs] I'll see you, okay. I'll be back.

(b) (6) So all the people know. And she actually wasn't from Questa. She was from Amalia. And you look at that river over there in Amalia. Beautiful. Fish you get out of there! These fish that you get out of here, they're not even solid. The look like half sickly. [Laughter]

SG: Someone told me they don't hatch. They stock the river.

(b) (6) Well if I was a fish, I wouldn't want to have no kids in that river either. [Laughter]. That's the different that I see. Of course the climate changed a little bit too. When I was a kid, we were in school the last month, we already had the good plows for our garden. We planted half of it already. And it was. The weather changed too. So it's not only that the people have changed, I think the climate has changed. Right now, we're getting snow in the mountains, and it's already, it's almost the first of June. Years ago, I never remember ever seeing snow after May. So even the climate has changed.

SG: It's El Nino or something.

(b) (6) El Nino. Well the scientists and all these professional people, they have to blame it on somebody. Of course they give it different names for different things. But I think, like my grandma used to say, that when it was going to be towards the end of the world, that the climate would change. The winters would become summers and the summers would become winter. And now, sometimes in December, you're with the screen door open. Sometimes in may, you can't even open your door because it's so cold.

SG: When I first came here, it was snowing on that day. I was pretty surprised. I just came from Florida.

(b) (6) Well because there is no snow in Florida. So the climated here alone have changed, compared to what it was when I was a young kid. We have no control in a climate because that it God that has done that. So you can't blame nobody for it. The other things that are happening, I

think that people, science . . . Like now when they got to clone those two sheep. Did you see that the other night, when that was on TV?

SG: No. What happened?

(b) (6) Some of their cells or something in the sheep is aging . . .

SG: In the clone?

(b) (6) Yeah. They're aging as fast as the oldest ones. Somethings in . . . I don't know . . .

SG: So they're growing older faster?

(b) (6) Yeah.

SG: Wow. I didn't know that.

(b) (6) Yeah. It was on TV.

SG: Yeah. I missed that.

(b) (6) Yeah. It was on TV. Their genes, or something in their system, they're aging the way were before, when they injected it into them. Yeah. They had it on TV. So you're real smart, but you're going to grow old. Instead of being thirty, you'll be eighty years old.

SG: I guess that's science. I don't know.

(b) (6) That's fooling with science when they did that. Again, I don't know.

SG: Well, I don't know. What else about Questa do you think you should tell me.

(b) (6) Well we have different people from different parts of the country or from different parts of the worlds, I don't know. It doesn't seem that they are as friendly. Only the people, the community, we talk to each other. I mean, "Good Morning," "Good Evening." I mean, there's nothing wrong in saying that. But years ago, you never locked your doors. You left your doors . . . Like me, now, when I go home, my screen door is closed, but my door is open. And but, it changed a litte bit of that. You trusted anybody around your propery, your shed, and they never stole anything. And now-a-days . . . but not only in big cities. It's here in Questa. Drugs in Questa getting to be bad. The people know it, but they're not doing nothing about it. And there's very few that are growing it or selling it. And they probably know who they are, but they don't want to squeal on any other person. I don't know. A lot of things have changed.

SG: So overall, what do you think about Questa.

(b) (6) Well I think it's a beatiful place to retire and live. I won't change my life here to Denver.

You're more calm, easier going people here then there is in a big city. In a big city, always in a hurry. You go to the grocery store, "I got to hurry. I gotta go do something." Why hurry? If you can't do it today, you finish tomorrow. But in a city, "Hi!," Hi!," "Oh, bye." They don't even have time to sit down over here. I got to the station over here and sometimes it takes me an hour to get gas. You sat down there on the bench and you talking to the people about the weather and the family. So I think living here, or it doesn't have to be in Questa. In any small villages, I think your life is more . . . if you're gonna live to eigty, you're probably gonna live to a hundred. I don't think there's so much up here. Constantly, that little maching . . . you're wearing out your gears. [Laughs].

SG: Yeah. You can be more calm here. More relaxed.

(b) (6) More relaxed. Just remember the things I say. If you ever go back to India, and you have grandfathers or great grandfathers and great uncles that you could talk to about how their life was and what it the way it is at the time it is there. To see what is happening. They are going to say here, unbelievable. In the United States, this is the way, the culture and other things. They agree with the United States maybe, but not deep inside their hearts they don't.

SG: I know. Even when I talk to my father, he grew up in a small village in India. The differences he tells me. It's pretty . . .

(b) (6) Yeah. But we had students that we had from India. And we talked about different things. And I could say, "What do you think about her?" And well, like he said, "It seems more like a movie type of a thing. More like a dream. Because we never seen this or we never see that. I went to school and I learned a lot. And now I'm here with you guys and you're teaching me something else. But going back to explain to those people that never dreamed of it, it would be hard for them to believe that." You go back to India and you say, "I had a little car and I went from here to there for so many miles. And I went and all this." They say, you have a car. They think you're rich, you're a millionare. Because I know in India, they don't have a car. Not everbody has a car.

SG: Not everybody has a telephone.

(b) (6) A lot of people don't have a TV. Well when I left here in 1951, there was no TV in Questa. I saw TV in New York. And then I went to Massachusetts. I saw TV. Then I came back and TV had came in Questa, just then. My uncle had a TV, and oh boy, the whole neighborhood wanted to go watch TV at my uncles. Now everybody's got two three TV's.

[End of Side A]

SG: So do you have any advise on how I can improve my interviewing skills?

(b) (6) No because you were never here. There was no way of . . . You had questions or were wondering how things were done here. But like I said, starting from the climate, there are a lot of changes that has been here. We hate to admit it sometimes. And some of them are for the good

and some of them are for the bad. Like kids years ago, I never heard from before World War II, anybody in Questa getting killed by a car accident. And since then, I bet you there is over a hundred people that got killed from Questa alone. That's another disadvantage about having a car. So a lot of things have changed.

SG: Less time to get from here to there. But you might get killed.

(b) (6) Yeah. I went with my father with horses and wagon, to grind wheat to make flour. From Questa, do you know San Luis Colorado is? It's just by the State Line, nineteen miles.

SG: Is it past Costilla?

(b) (6) Yeah. Past Costilla, there's another village by the name of San Luis. And there is they have a mill to grind the wheat. And you have to take, say ten sacks of wheat and give it to them. And they give you five sacks of flour. So two to one. And it took us . . . we started here at four o'clock in the morning, with horses and a wagon, and of course we had ten sacks or however many sack we had. And we got back that night in the evening, I don't know what time it was. Just to go thirty nine miles.

SG: This was from your farm, or your family's farm?

(b) (6) My mom. My dad and my mom, they raised wheat. And when they had already had thrashed that wheat. They saved that much wheat, we took it down there. With that wheat we feed the chickens and the animals. And then with the rest, we took it down there to make flour so we could have flour for the whole winter. There was six of us in the family. So it's easier to go to the grocery store than it is to farm wheat. So there is a difference. It would have been real nice to have video cameras then, so you could take pictures of grandfathers, great grandfathers. The way they worked in the farms and how they preserved food. We had a cellar. Everybody, most of the people had cellars. And anything that was grown underground, like turnips, carrots, red beets, all that was laid in the ground on the cellars. Now things like watermelon, eggs, that been refrigerated. And now I bet, you go to Questa, I bet you don't find even fifty cellars. And there's more people now. They just run down the street to where the supermarket it.

SG: To buy the waxy apples.

(b) (6) Correct. Don't take my word for it. You be around from Taos, Arroyo Seco, or Arroyo Hondo, or Questa. And you happen to see an orchard. Stop and just get an apple. Steal it. They won't tell you off. Just get one, and wash it, and get the dust or whatever, and bite and eat it. And see the difference of an apple from there and from the store.

SG: Yeah. I'll sneak in sometime.

(b) (6) Yeah. Well you'll say, "well he told me." [Laughter]. Or if you see somebody in a garden that has a garden, you have to stop and they have a carrot. Tell them . . . and don't be bashful, because most people here are real nice about it. "Could I have one of those carrots?" Try that

carrot and eat it. And a week later, you'll still be thinking about that carrot.

SG: I'd want to start my own garden then.

(b) (6) Right. But after you worked, weeding and watering, you know it takes along time, you say it's easier for me to go buy it.

SG: Well thank you again for talking to me, and . . .

(b) (6) You're welcome. And if I could be of any help.

SG: Oh, you've been a lot of help.

(b) (6) Like I said, the pollution, I don't notice the pollution as much. Well, the river. But other than that. But if you go to a big city, you'll know what I'm talking about pollution. [Laughter] [Tape ends]